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Nov. 62

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96-[Wirt, William.] The British spy. . . . by  
a young Englishman of rank. 16mo, original  
bds. (rebacked with paper), uncut. Newbury-  
port, 1804. \$7.50

Sabin 8123 & 104871. This work in the first (Rich-  
mond, 1803) & other editions is entitled Letters of  
the British Spy. The "letter" first were printed in  
the Virginia Argus & their author was not a "young  
Englishman" but a Marylander who practiced law in  
Virginia & was later U. S. Attorney-General. Fol-  
lowing the 10 letters in this edition is "Characters,  
&c.," being sketches of James Monroe & John Mar-  
shall.

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John B. Nichols



Wilt, Worcester.  
THE

## BRITISH SPY :

OR,

### LETTERS,

TO A

MEMBER OF THE BRITISH PARLIAMENT,

WRITTEN

DURING A TOUR THROUGH

THE

### UNITED STATES.

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BY A YOUNG ENGLISHMAN OF RANK.

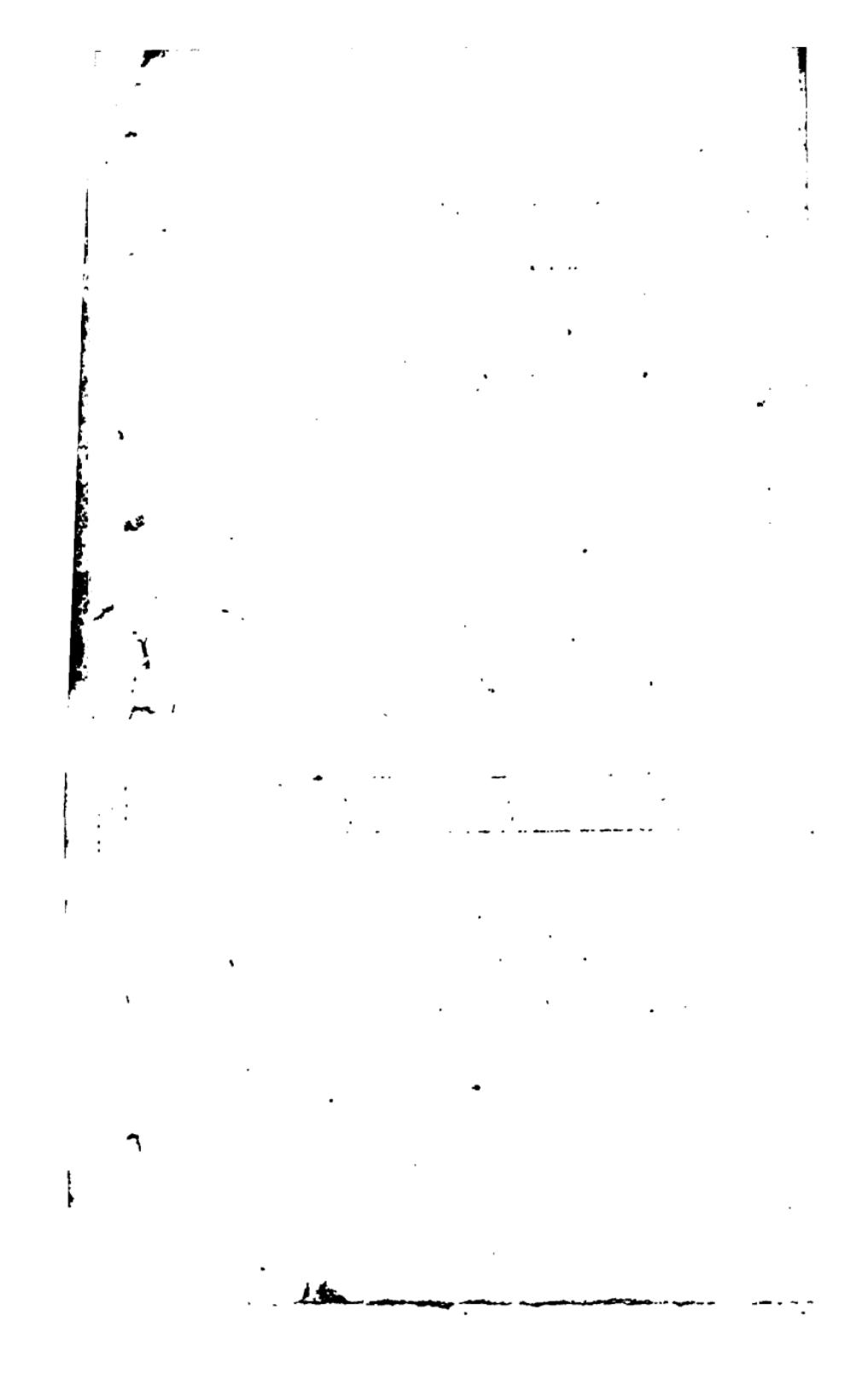
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**NEWBURYPORT :**

PRINTED AT THE REPERTORY OFFICE.

1804.



THIS selection of Letters first appeared in the *Advertiser*, a paper published in RICHMOND, Virginia. The first inquiry, with every reader, will probably be, who was the Author? The only satisfaction I can give, on this subject, is the address to the Printer, which introduced the first letter.

“MR. PLEASANTS,

“THE Manuscript from which the following letters are extracted, was found in the bed chamber of a boarding house, in a seaport town of Virginia. The gentleman who had previously occupied that chamber, is represented by the mistress of the House, to have been a meek and harmless young man, who meddled very little with the affairs of others, and concerning whom no one appeared sufficiently interested to make any inquiry. As it seems, from the manuscript, that the name by which he passed was not his real name, and as, moreover, she knew nothing of his residence, so that she was totally ignorant to whom and whither to direct it, she considered the manuscript as lawful prize, and made a present of it to me. It seems to be a copy of Letters, written by a young Englishman of rank, during his tour through the United States, to a Member of the British Parliament. They are dated from almost every part of the United States, contain a great deal of Geographical description, or delineation of every character of note among us, some literary disquisitions; with a great mixture of moral and political observation. The letters are prettily written. Persons of every description will find in them a light and agreeable entertainment, and to the younger part of your readers they may not be uninstructive. For the present, I select a

few which were written from this place, and by way of distinction, will give them to you under the title of the **BRITISH SICK.**"

LITTLE credit, however, is to be given to this account. The letters are undoubtedly the production of an American, and it is supposed a citizen of Virginia. They are considered as such, where they first appeared, and have excited much newspaper controversy. The severity of his strictures on the Virginians is, perhaps, two unqualified. It is not with a wish to propagate his prejudices that they are republished, but for the sake of the ease and elegance of the composition, and many excellent strokes of nature, and sentiment which they contain. To render the satisfaction of perusing them more complete, I have ventured to explain the blanks, not from personal knowledge, but by observing how the references are understood, in southern papers.

THE letters are supposed to be addressed to Mr. SHERIDAN. In the eighth page, the first blank refers to Captain MURRAY, and the second to Lord DUNMORE. In the fifty-ninth page, we are to understand Mr. EDMUND RANDOLPH, and in the sixty-second, Mr. MARSHALL, Chief Justice of the United States.

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## BRITISH SPY.

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### LETTER I.

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RICHMOND, SEPT. 1.

YOU complain my dear S\*\*\*\*\*\*, that although I have been resident in Richmond upwards of six months, you have heard nothing of me since my arrival. The truth is, that I have suspended writing until a more intimate acquaintance with the people and their country, should furnish me with materials for a correspondence. Having now collected those materials, the apology ceases, and the correspondence begins. But first a word of myself.

I still continue to wear the mask, and most willingly exchange the attentions which would be paid to my rank, for the superior and exquisite pleasure of inspecting this country and this people, without attracting to myself a single eye of curiosity, or awakening a shade of suspicion. Under my assumed name, I gain an admittance, close enough to trace at leisure, every line of the American character ; while the plainness or

rather humility of my appearance, my manners and conversation, puts no one on his guard, but enables me to take a portrait of nature, as it were, asleep and naked. Besides, there is something of innocent roguery in the masquerade which I am playing, that suits very well with the sportiveness of my temper. To sit and decoy the human heart from behind all its disguises—to watch the capricious evolutions of unrestrained nature, tripling, curveting and gambolling at her ease, with the curtain of ceremony drawn up to the very sky—O ! it is delightful !

You are perhaps surprised at my speaking of the attentions which would be paid, in this country, to my rank. You will suppose then I have forgotten where I am ; no such thing. I remember well enough that I am in Virginia : that state which, of all the rest, plumes herself most highly on the democratick spirit of her principles.—Her political principles are, indeed, democratick enough in all conscience. Rights and privileges, as regulated by the constitution of the state, belong in an equal degree to all the citizens ; and Peter Pindar's remark is perfectly true of the people of this country, that “every black-guard scoundrel is a king.” Nevertheless, there exists in Virginia a species of local rank, from which no country can, I presume, be entirely free. I mean that kind of rank which arises from the different degrees of

wealth and of intellectual refinement.—These must introduce a style of living and conversation, the former of which a poor man cannot attain, while an ignorant one would be incapable of enjoying the latter. It seems to me, that from these causes, wherever they may exist, circles of society, strongly discriminated, must inevitably result. And one of these causes exists in full force in Virginia, for, however, they may vaunt of equal liberty in church and state, they have but little to boast on the subject of equal property. Indeed there is no country, I believe, where property is more unequally distributed than in Virginia.—This inequality struck me with peculiar force, in riding through the lower countries on the Potowmack. Here and there a stately aristocratick palace, with all its appurtenances, strikes the view. While all around for many miles, no other buildings are to be seen, but the little smoky huts and log cabins of poor, laborious, ignorant tenants. And what is very ridiculous, these tenants, while they approach the great house, cap in hand, with all the fearful trembling submission of the lowest, feudal vassals, boast, in their court house yards, with obstreperous exultation, they live in a land of freemen, a land of equal liberty and equal rights. Whether this debasing sense of inferiority which I have mentioned, is but a remnant of the colonial character, or wheth-

8 BRITISH SPY.

er it be that it is natural for poverty and impotence to look up with veneration to wealth and property and rank, I cannot decide. For my own part, however, I have ascribed it to the latter cause ; and I have been in a great degree confirmed in the opinion, by observing the attentions which were paid, by the most genteel people here, to——the son of Lord——. You know the circumstances in which his lordship left Virginia ; that so far from being popular, he carried with him the deepest execrations of these people. Even now his name is seldom mentioned here, but in connexion with terms of abhorrence or contempt. Aware of this, and believing it impossible that——was indebted to his father for all the parade of respect which was shewn to him, I sought in his own personal accomplishments a solution of the phenomenon. But I sought in vain. Without one solitary ray of native genius, without one adventitious beam of science, without any of those traits of soft benevolence which are so universally captivating, I found his mind dark and benighted, his manners bold, forward and assuming, and his whole character evidently inflated with the consideration that he was the son of a lord. His deportment was so evidently dictated by this consideration, and he regarded the Virginians so palpably in the humiliating light of inferior plebeians, that I have often wondered how

such a man, and the son too of so unpopular a father, escaped from this country without personal injury, or at least personal insult. I am now persuaded that this impunity and the great respect which was paid to him resulted solely from his noble descent, and was nothing more than the tribute which man pays either to imaginary or real superiority.

On this occasion, I stated my surprise to a young Virginian, who happened to be one of the democratick party. He, however, did not choose to admit the statement ; but asserted that whatever respect had been shewn to \_\_\_\_\_ proceeded solely from the federalists : and that it was an unguarded ebullition of their private attachment to monarchy and its appendages. I then stated the subject to a very sensible gentleman, whom I knew to belong to the federal phalanx. Not willing to degrade his party, by admitting that they would prostrate themselves before the empty shadow of nobility, he alledged that nothing had been manifested towards young \_\_\_\_\_ beyond the hospitality which was due to a genteel stranger ; and that if there had been any thing of parade on his account, it was attributable only to the ladies, who had merely exercised their wonted privilege of coqueting it with a fine young fellow. But notwithstanding all this, it was easy to discern, in the look, the voice, and whole manner with which gentlemen as well as ladies of both

parties saluted and accosted young——, a sacred spirit of respectful diffidence, a species of silent reverential abasement which could not have been excited by his personal qualities, and must have been homage to his rank. Judge then whether I have not just reason to apprehend, that on the annunciation of my real name, the curtain of ceremony would fall, and nature would cease to play her pranks before me.

Richmond is built, as you will remember on the north side of James River, and at the head of the tide water. There is a manuscript in this state, which relates a curious anecdote concerning the origin of this town. The land hereabouts was owned by Col. William Bird. This gentleman, with the former proprietor of the town at the head of tide water on Appomattox river, was appointed, it seems, to run the line between Virginia and North Carolina. The operation was a most tremendous one; for, in the execution of it, they had to penetrate and pass quite through the great dismal swamp. It would be almost impossible to give you a just conception of the horrors of this enterprise. Imagine to yourself an immense morass, thirty or forty miles in diameter: its soil a black deep mire, covered with a stupendous forest of Juniper and Cypress trees, whose luxuriant branches, interwoven throughout, intercept the beams of the sun and teach day to counterfeit the

parting vessels exhibit a curious and interesting appearance :—then again on the opposite side, the little town of Manchester, built on a hill which, sloping gently to the river, opens the whole town to the view, interspersed as it is with vigorous and flourishing poplars, and surrounded to a great distance by green plains and stately woods—all these objects falling at once under the eye, constitute by far the most finely varied and most animated landscape that I have ever seen. A mountain, like the blue ridge, in the western horizon, and the rich tint with which the hand of a Pennsylvania farmer would paint the adjacent fields, would make the most enchanting spot that ever Damascus is described to be. I will endeavour to procure for you a perspective view of Richmond with the embellishment of fancy which I have just mentioned, and you will do me the honour to give it a place in your pavilion.

Adieu for the present, my dear S\*\*\*\*\*  
—May the perpetual smiles of Heaven be yours.

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LETTER II.

night. The forest, which, until that time, perhaps the human foot had never violated, had become the secure retreat of ten thousand beasts of prey. The adventurers, therefore, beside the almost endless labour of felling trees, in a proper direction to form a footway throughout, moved, amid perpetual terrors, and each night had to sleep *en militaire* upon their arms, surrounded with the deafening, soul chilling yell of those hunger smitten lords of the desert. It was one night as they lay in the midst of scenes like those, that Hope, that never failing friend of man, paid them a consoling visit, and sketched in brilliant prospect the plans of Richmond and Petersburg.

Richmond occupies a very picturesque and most beautiful situation. I have never met with such an assemblage of striking and interesting objects. The town, dispersed over hills of various shades—the river, descending from west to east, and obstructed by a multitude of small islands, clumps of trees and myriads of rocks, among which it rumbles, foams and roars, consisting of what are called the falls—the same river at the lower end of the town, bending at right angles to the south, and winding reluctantly off for many miles in that direction, its polished surface caught here and there by the eye, but more generally covered from the view by trees, among which the white sails of approaching and de-

## BRITISH SPY.

### LETTER II.

RICHMOND, SEPTEMBER, 7.

ALMOST every day, my dear S\*\*\*\*\*\*, some new evidence presents itself in support of the Abbe Raynal's opinion, that this continent was once covered by the ocean, from which it has gradually emerged. But that this emersion is, even comparatively speaking, of recent date, cannot be admitted ; unless the comparison be made with the creation of the earth ; and even then, in order to justify the remark, the æra of the creation must, I fear, be fixed much farther back, than the period which has been inferred from the Mosaic account.

The following facts are authenticated beyond any kind of doubt. During the last spring, a gentleman in the neighbourhood of Williamsburg, about sixty miles below this place, in digging a ditch on his farm, discovered, about four or five feet below the surface of the earth, a considerable portion of the skeleton of a Whale. Several fragments of the ribs and other parts of the system were

found ; and all the vertebræ regularly arranged and very little impaired as to their figure. The spot on which this skeleton was found lies about two miles from the nearest shore of James River, and fifty or sixty from the Atlantick Ocean. The whole phenomenon bore the clearest evidence that the animal had perished in its native element ; and as the ocean is the only resort for the Whale, it follows that the ocean must once have covered the country at least as high up at Williamsburg.

Again, in digging several wells lately in this town, the teeth of Sharks were found from sixty to ninety or an hundred feet below the surface of the earth. The probability is that these teeth were deposited by the Shark itself ; and as this fish is never known to infest very shallow waters, the conclusion is clear, that this whole country has been buried under several fathoms of water. At all events, these teeth must be considered as ascertaining what was once the surface of the earth here ; which surface is very little higher than that of James River. Now if it be considered that there has been no perceptible difference wrought in the figure or elevation of the coast, nor consequently, in the precipitation of the interior streams since the earliest record discovery of Virginia, which was two hundred years ago, it will follow that James River must for many hundreds, perhaps

thousands of years, have been running, at least here, with a very rapid, headlong current ; the friction whereof must certainly have rendered the channel much deeper than it was at the time of the deposition of these teeth. The result is clear that the surface of the stream which, even now, after this friction and consequent depression, is so nearly on a level with the site of the Shark's teeth, must, originally, have been much higher. I take this to be an irrefragable proof that the land here, was then, inundated ; and as there is no ground between this and the Atlantick, higher than that on which Richmond is built, it seems to me indisputably certain, that the whole of this beautiful country was once covered with a dreary waste of water.

To what curious and interesting reflections does this subject lead us ! Over this hill on which I am now sitting and writing at my ease, and from which I look, with delight on the landscape that smiles around me—over this hill and over this landscape, the billows of the ocean have rolled in wild and dreadful fury, while the leviathan, the whale, and all the monsters of the deep, have disported themselves amid the fearful tempest.

Where was then the shore of the ocean ?— From this place, for eighty miles to the westward, the ascent of the country is very gradual ; and even up the Blue Ridge, marine shells and other phenomena are found, which

demonstrate that *that* country too, has been visited by the ocean.—How then has it emerged? Has it been by a sudden convulsion? Certainly not.—No observing man, who has ever travelled from the Blue Ridge to the Atlantic can doubt this emersion has been effected by very slow gradations. For as you advance to the east, the proofs of the former submersion of the country thicken upon you. On the shores of York river, the bones of the Whale abound; and I have been not a little amused in walking on the sand beach of that river, during the recess of the tide, and looking up at the high cliff or bank above me, to observe strata of sea shells not yet calcined, like those which lay on the beach under my feet; interspersed with strata of earth (the joint result no doubt of sand and putrid vegetable) exhibiting at once a sample of the manner in which the adjacent soil had been formed, and proof of the comparatively recent desertion of the waters.

Upon the whole, every thing here tends to confirm the ingenious theory of Mr. Buffon; that the eastern coasts of continents are enlarged by the perpetual revolution of the earth from West to East, which has the obvious tendency to conglomerate the loose sands of the sea on the eastern coast; while the tides of the ocean, drawn from east to west, against the revolving earth, contribute to aid the process, and hasten the alluvion.

But admitting the Abbe Raynal's idea, that America is a far younger country than either of the other continents, or in other words, that America has emerged long since their formation, how did it happen that the materials which compose this continent were not accumulated on the eastern coast of Asia? — Was it that the present mountains of America, then protuberances on the bed of the ocean, intercepted a part of the passing sands which would otherwise have been washed on the Asiatic shore, and thus became the rudiments of this vast continent? If so, America is under much greater obligations to her barren mountains, than she has hitherto supposed.

But while Mr. Buffon's theory accounts very handsomely for the enlargement of the eastern coast, it offers no kind of reason for any extension of the western; on the contrary the very causes assigned to supply the addition to the eastern, seem at first view, to threaten a diminution of the western coast. Accordingly, Mr. Buffon, we see, has adopted also the latter idea; and in the constant alluvion from the western coast of one continent, has found a perennial source of materials for the eastern coast of that which lies behind it. This last idea, however, by no means quadrates with the hypothesis that the mountains of America formed the original stamina of the continent; for on the latter

immediately refer to the book, Stith in his history of Virginia, has recorded similar traditions among the Atlantick tribes of Indians. I have no doubt that if McKenzie had been as well qualified for scientifick research, as he was undoubtedly honest, firm and persevering, it would have been in his power to have thrown great lights on this subject, as it relates to the western country.

For my own part, while I believe the present mountains of America to have constituted the original stamina of the continent, I believe, at the same time, the western as well as the eastern country to be the effect of alluvion ; produced too by the same causes ; the rotation of the earth, and the planetary attraction of the ocean. The conception of this will be easy and simple, if, instead of confounding the mind, by a wide view of the whole continent as it now stands, we carry back our imagination to the time of its birth, and suppose some one of the highest pinnacles of the Blue Ridge to have just emerged above the surface of the sea. Now whether the rolling of the earth to the east give to the ocean, which floats loosely upon its bosom, an actual counter current, to the west, which is, occasionally, further accelerated by the motion of the tides in that direction, or whether this be not the case, still to our newly emerged pinnacle, which is whirled by the earth's motion, through the waters of the

deep, the consequences will be the same as if there were this actual and strong current. For while the waters will be continually accumulated on the eastern coast of this pinnacle, it is obvious that on the western coast (protected as it would be, from the current, by the newly riven earth) the waters will always be comparatively low and calm. The result is clear. The sands, borne along by the ocean's current over the northern and southern extremities of this pinnacle, will always have a tendency to settle in the calm behind it ; and thus, by perpetual accumulations, from a western coast, more rapidly perhaps than an eastern one ; as we may see in miniature by the capes and shallows, collected by the still water, on each side, at the mouths of creeks, or below rocks, in the rapids of a river.

After this new born point of earth had gained some degree of elevation, it is probable that successive coats of vegetation, according to Dr. Darwin's idea, springing up, then falling and dying on the earth, paid an annual tribute to the infant continent, while such rain as fell upon it, bore down a part of its substance and assisted perpetually in the enlargement of its area.

It is curious that the arrangement of the mountains both in North and South America, as well as the shape of the two continents, combines to strengthen the present theory.

For the mountains, as you will perceive on inspecting your maps, run, in chains from north to south ; thus opposing the widest possible barrier to the sands, as they roll from east to west. The shape of the continents is just that which would naturally be expected from such an origin ; that is, they lie along, collaterally, with the mountains. As far north as the country is well known, these ranges of mountains are observed ; and it is remarkable that as soon as the Cordilleras terminate in the south, the continent of South America ends ; where they terminate in the north, the continent dwindleth to a narrow isthmus.

Assuming this theory as correct, it is amusing to observe the conclusions to which it will lead us.

As the country is supposed to have been formed by gradual accumulations, and as these accumulations were most probably equal or nearly so in every part, it follows that, broken as this country is, in hills and dales, it has assumed no new appearance by its emersion ; but that the figure of the earth's surface is the same throughout, as well where it is now covered by the waters of the ocean, as where it has been already denuded. So that Mr. Boyle's mountains in the sea, cease to have any thing wonderful in them.

Connected with this, it is not an improbable conclusion, that new continents, and islands are now forming on the bed of the ocean. Perhaps at some future day, land, may emerge in the neighbourhood of the Antarctic circle, which by progressive accumulations and a consequent increase of weight may keep a juster balance between the poles, and produce a material difference in our astronomical relations. The navigators of that day will be as successful in their discoveries in the south seas, as Columbus was heretofore in the northern. For there can be little doubt that there has been a time when Columbus, if he had lived, would have found his reasonings, on the balance of the earth, fallacious ; and would have sought these seas for a continent, as much in vain, as Drake, Anson, Cooke and others, encouraged perhaps by similar reasoning, have since sought the ocean in the south.

If Mr. Buffon's notion be correct, that the eastern coast of one continent is perpetually feeding on the western coast of that which lies before it, the conclusion is inevitable, that the present materials of Europe and Africa and Asia in succession, will, at some future day, compose the continents of North and South America, while the latter thrown on the Asiatic shore, will again make a part, and in time, the whole of that continent to which, by some philosophers, they are sup-

posed to have been originally attached. It is equally clear that, by this means, the continents will not only exchange their materials, but their position ; so that in process of time, they must respectively make a tour around the globe, maintaining, still, the same ceremonious distance from each other, which they now hold.

According to my theory, which supposes an alluvion on the western as well as the eastern coasts, the continents and islands of the earth, will be caused, reciprocally to approximate, and (if materials enough can be found in the bed of the ocean or generated by any operation of nature) ultimately to unite. Our island of Great Britain, therefore, at some future day, and in proper person, will probably invade the territory of France. In the course of this process of alluvion as it relates to this country, the refluent waters of the Atlantick will be forced to recede from Hampton Roads and the Chesapeake, the beds whereof will become fertile vallies, or, as they are called here, river bottoms ; while the lands in the lower district of the state, which are now only a very few feet above the surface of the sea, will rise into majestic eminences, and the present sickly site of Norfolk be converted into a high and salubrious mountain. I apprehend, however, that the present inhabitants of Norfolk would be extremely unwilling to have such an ef-

fect wrought in their day ; since there can be little doubt that they prefer their present commercial situation, incumbered as it is by the annual visits of the yellow fever, to the elevation and health of the Blue Ridge.

In the course of the process, too, of which I have been speaking, if the theory be correct, the gulf of Mexico will be eventually filled up, and the West India Islands consolidated with the American continent.

These consequences, visionary as they may now appear, are not only probable, but if the alluvion which is demonstrated to have taken place already, should continue, they are inevitable. There is very little probability that the isthmus of Darien, which connects the continents, is coeval with the Blue Ridge or the Cordilleras ; and it requires only a continuation of the causes which produced the isthmus, to effect the reception of the gulph and the consolidation of the islands with the continent.

But when ? I am possessed of no data whereby the calculations can be made.— The depth at which Herculaneum and Pompeia were found to be buried in the course of 1600 years affords us no light on this inquiry ; because their burial was effected not by the slow alluvion and accumulation of time, but by the sudden eruptions of Vesuvius. As little are we aided by the repletion of the earth around the Tarpeian rock in

Rome ; since that repletion was most probably effected in a very great degree by the materials of fallen buildings. And besides, the original height of the rock is not ascertained with any kind of precision, historians having, I believe, merely informed us that it was sufficiently elevated to kill the criminals who were thrown from its summit.

But a truce with philosophy. Who could have believed that the skeleton of an unwieldy Whale, and a few mouldering teeth of a Shark would have led me such a dance !— Adieu, my dear S\*\*\*\*\*\*, for the present. May the light of Heaven continue to shine around you !

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LETTER III.

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## BRITISH SPY.

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### LETTER III.

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RICHMOND, SEPTEMBER, 15.

YOU inquire into the state of your favourite art in Virginia. Eloquence my dear S\*\*\*\*\*\*, has few successful votaries here. I mean eloquence of the highest order ; such as that, to which not only the bosom of your friend, but the feelings of the whole British nation, bore evidence, in listening to the charge of the Begums in the prosecution of Warren Hastings.

In the national and state legislatures, as well as at the various bars in the United States, I have heard great volubility, much good sense, and some random touches of the pathetick ; but in the same bodies I have heard a far greater proportion of puerile rant, of tedious and disgusting inanity. Three remaks are true as to almost all their orators.

First ; they have not a sufficient fund of general knowledge.

Secondly ; they have not the habit of close and solid thinking.

Thirdly ; they do not aspire at original ornaments.

From these three defects it most generally results, that, although they pour out, easily enough, a torrent of words, yet these are destitute of the light of erudition, the practical utility of just and copious thought, of those novel and beautiful allusions and embellishments with which the very scenery of the country is so highly calculated to inspire them.

The truth is, my dear S\*\*\*\*\*\*, that this scarcity of genuine and sublime eloquence is not confined to the United States ; instances of it in any civilized country have always been rare indeed. Mr. Blair is certainly correct in the opinion, that a state of nature is most favourable to the higher efforts of the imagination, and the more unrestrained and noble raptures of the heart. Civilization, wherever it has gained ground, has interwoven with society, a habit of artificial and elaborate decorum, which mixes in every operation of life, detersthe fancy from every bold enterprize, and buries nature under a load of hypocritical ceremonies. A man therefore, in order to be eloquent, has to forget the habits in which he has been educated ; and never will he touch his audience so exquisitely, as when he goes back to

the primitive simplicity of the patriarchal age.

I have said that instances of genuine and sublime eloquence have always been rare in every country. It is true that Tully, and Pliny the younger, have, in their epistles, represented Rome, in their respective days, as swarming with orators of the first class: yet from the specimens which they themselves have left us, I am led to entertain a very humble opinion of ancient eloquence. Demosthenes, we know, has pronounced, not the chief, but the sole merit of an orator to consist in *delivery*, or, as lord Verulam translates it, in *action*; and, although I know that the world would proscribe it as a literary heresy, I cannot help believing Tully's merit to have been principally of that kind. For my own part, I confess very frankly, that have never met with any thing of his, which has, according to my taste, deserved the name of superior eloquence. His style, indeed, is pure, polished, sparkling, full and sonorous, and, perhaps, deserves all the encomiums which have been bestowed on it. But an oration certainly no more deserves the title of superior eloquence because its style is ornamented, than the figure of an Apollo would deserve the epithet of elegant merely from the superior texture and flow of the drapery. In reading an oration it is the mind to which I look. It is the expanse and

richness or the conception itself which I regard, and not the glittering tinsel wherein it may be attired. Tully's orations, examined in this spirit, have with me, sunk far below the grade at which we have been taught to fix them. It is true, that at school I learnt, like the rest of the world, to lisp, "Cicero the orator": but when I grew up and began to judge for myself, I opened his volume again, and looked in vain for that sublimity of conception which fills and astonishes the mind, that simple pathos which finds such a sweet welcome to every breast, or that restless enthusiasm of unaffected passion which takes the heart by storm. On the contrary let me confess to you that, whatever may be the cause, to me, he seemed cold and vapid and uninteresting and tiresome: not only destitute of that compulsive energy of thought, which we look for in a great man, but ever void of the strong, rich and varied colouring of a superior fancy.—His master-piece of composition, his work, *De Oratore*, is, in my judgment, extremely light and unsubstantial; and, in truth, is little more than a tissue of rhapsodies, assailing the ear, indeed, with pleasant sounds, but leaving few clear and useful traces on the mind.—Plutarch speaks of his person as all grace, his voice as perfect musick, his look and gesture as all alive, striking, dignified and peculiarly impressive; and I incline to the opinion that to these theatri-

cal advantages, connected with the just reliance which the Romans had in his patriotism and good judgment, their strong interest in the subjects discussed by him, and their more intimate acquaintance with the idiom of his language, his fame, while living, arose ; and that it has been since propagated by the schools on account of the classick purity and elegance of his style. Many of these remarks are, in my opinion, equally applicable to Demosthenes. He deserves, indeed, the distinction of having more fire and less smoke than Tully. But in the majestick march of the mind—in force of thought and splendour of imagery, I think both the orators of Greece and Rome eclipsed by more than one person within his majesty's dominions.

Heavens ! How I should be abathematized and excommunicated by every pedagogue in Great Britain, if these remarks were made publick ! Spirits of Car and of Ascham ! have mercy upon me ! Woe betide the hand that plucks the wizard beard of hoary error. From lisping infancy to stooping age, the reproaches, the curses of the world shall be upon it !—But to you, my dearest S\*\*\*\*\*\*, my friend, my preceptor, to you I disclose my opinions with the same freedom and for the same purpose, that I would expose my wounds to a surgeon. To you it is peculiarly proper that I should make my appeal on this subject : for

when eloquence is the theme, your name is not far off !

Tell me, then, you, who are capable of doing it, what is this divine eloquence ? What, the charm by which the orator binds the senses of his audience—by which he attunes and touches and sweeps the human lyre, with the irresistible sway and master hand of a Timotheus ? Is not the whole mystery comprehended in one word—SYMPATHY ? I mean not merely that tender passion which quavers the lip and fills the eye of the babe when he looks on the sorrows and tears of a mother ; but that still more delicate and subtle quality, by which we passively catch the very colours, momentum and strength of the mind, to whose operations we are attending ; which converts every speaker to whom we listen, into a Procrustes ; and enables him for the moment to stretch or lop our faculties to fit the standard in his own mind ?

This is a very curious subject, I am sometimes half inclined to adopt the notion stated by our Great Bacon, in his original and masterly treatise on the Advancement of Learning. “Fascination says he, is the power and “act of imagination intensive upon other bodies than the body of the imagin-“inant ; wherein the school of Paracelsus “and the disciples of pretended natural mag-“ick have been so intemperate, as that they “have exalted the power of the imagination,

“ to be much one of the power of miracle-  
“ working faith :—others that draw nearer to  
“ probability, calling to their view the secret  
“ passages of things and especially of the con-  
“ tagion that passeth from body to body, do  
“ conceive it should likewise be agreeable to  
“ nature, that there should be some transmis-  
“ sions and operations from spirit to spirit,  
“ without the mediation of the senses :—  
“ whence the conceits have grown, now al-  
“ most made civil, of the mastering spirit,  
“ and the force, confidence, and the like.”  
This notion is farther explained in his *Sylva Sylvarum*, wherein he tells a story of an Egyptian soothsayer who made Mark Anthony believe that his genius, which was otherwise brave and confident, was in the presence of Octavianus Cæsar, poor and cowardly : and therefore he advised him to absent himself as much as he could, and remove far from him. It turned out, however, that this soothsayer was suborned by Cleopatra, who wished Anthony's company in Egypt.

Yet, if there be not something of this secret intercourse from spirit to spirit, how does it happen that one speaker shall gradually invade and benumb all the faculties of my soul, as if I were handling a torpedo ; while another, like the *gymnotus* of Surinam, shall arouse me with an electrick shock ? How does it happen that the first shall infuse his poor spirit into my system, lethargise my na-

tive intellects, and bring down my powers exactly to the level of his own ; or that the last shall descend upon me like an angel of light, breathe new energies into my frame, dilate my soul with his own intelligence, exalt me into a new and noble region of thought, snatch me from the earth at pleasure, and rap me to the seventh heaven ? And, what is still more wonderful, how does it happen that these different effects endure so long after the agency of the speaker has ceased ? In so much that if I sit down to any intellectual exercise, after listening to the first speaker, my performance shall be unworthy even of me, and the numb-fish visible and tangible in every sentence ; whereas, if I enter on the same amusement, after having attended to the last mentioned orator, I shall be astonished at the elevation and vigour of my own thoughts ; and if I meet accidentally with the same production a month or two afterwards, when my mind has lost the inspiration, shall scarcely recognize it for my own work. Whence all this ? To me it would seem, that it must proceed either from the subtle commerce between the spirits of men, which Lord Verulam notices, and which enables the speaker thereby to identify his hearer with himself : or else that the mind of man possesses, independently of any volition on the part of its proprietor, a species of pupillary faculty of dilating and contracting it-

self in proportion to the pencil of the rays of light which the speaker throws upon it ; which dilatation or contraction, as in the case of the eye cannot be immediately and abruptly altered.

Whatever may be the solution, the fact, I think, is certainly as I have stated it. And it is remarkable that the same effect is produced, though perhaps in a less degree, by perusing books into which different degrees of spirit and genius have been infused. I am acquainted with a gentleman who never sits down to a composition wherein he wishes to shine, without previously reading, with intense application, half a dozen pages of his favourite Bolingbroke. Having taken the character and impulse of that writer's mind he declares that he feels his pen to flow with a spirit not his own; and that, if, in the course of his work, his powers begin to languish, he finds it easy to revive and charge them afresh from the same never failing source. If these things be not visionary, it becomes important to a man, for a new reason, what book he reads and what company he keeps; since, according to Lord Verulam's notion, an influx of the spirits of others may change the native character of his heart and understanding, before he is aware of it; or, according to the other suggestion, he may so habitually contract the pupil of his mind, as to be disqualified for the comprehension of a great subject, and

fit only for microscopick observations. Whereas by keeping the company and reading the works of men of magnanimity and genius only, he may receive their qualities by subtle transmission, and eventually get the eye, the ardour and the enterprise of an eagle.



## LETTER IV.

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## BRITISH SPY.

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### LETTER IV.

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RICHMOND, SEPTEMBER, 15.

BUT whether am I wandering? Permit me to return. Admitting the correctness of the principles formerly mentioned, it would seem to be a fair conclusion, that whenever an orator wishes to know what effect he has wrought on his audience, he shonld cooly and conscientiously propound to himself this question—have I, myself, throughout my oration, felt those clear and cogent convictions of judgment, and that pure and exalted fire of the soul, with which I wished to inspire others? For, he may rely on it, that he cannot more impart (or, to use Bacon's word, transmit) convictions and sensations which he himself has not, at the time, sincerely felt, than he can convey a clear title to property, in which he himself has no title.

This leads me to remark a defect, which I have noticed more than once in this country. Following up too closely the cold conceit of the Roman division of an oration, the speakers set aside a particular part of their discourse, usually the peroration, in which

they take it into their heads that they will be pathetick. Accordingly, when they reach this part, whether it be prompted by the feelings or not, a mighty bustle commences. The speaker pricks up his ears, erects his chest, tosses his arms with hysterick vehemence, and says every thing which he supposes ought to affect his hearers ; but it is all in vain : for it is obvious that every thing he says is prompted by the head, and however it may display his ingenuity and fertility—however it may appeal to the admiration of his hearers, it will never strike deeper. The hearts of the audience will refuse all commerce except with the heart of the speaker ; nor in this commerce is it possible by any disguise, however artful, to impose false ware on them. However the speaker may labour to seem to feel, however near he may approach to the appearance of the reality, the heart nevertheless possesses a keen, unerring sense, which never fails to detect the imposture. It would seem as if the heart of man stamps a secret mark on all its effusions, which alone can give them currency, and which no ingenuity, however adroit, can successfully imitate. I have been not a little diverted here, in listening to some fine orators who deal almost entirely in this pathos of the head. They practise the start, the pause—make an immense parade of attitudes and gestures, and seem to imagine themselves piercing the heart with a thousand

seconds. The heart all the time, developing every trick that is played to cajole her, and sitting serene and composed, looks on and smiles at the ridiculous pageant as it passes. Nothing can, in my opinion, be more illy judged in an orator, than to indulge himself in this idle, artificial parade. It is particularly unfortunate in an exordium. It is as much as to say, *caveat auditor*; and for my own part, the moment I see an orator rise with this menacing majesty—assume a look of solemn wisdom—stretch forth his right arm, like the *rubens dexter* of Jove—and hear him open his throat in deep and tragick tone, I feel myself involuntarily braced and in an attitude of defence, as if I were going to take a bout with Mendoza. The Virginians boast of an orator of nature, whose manner was the reverse of all this; and he is the only orator of whom they do boast, with much emphasis. I mean the celebrated Patrick Henry, whom I regret that I came to this country too late to see. I cannot, indeed, easily forgive him, even in the grave, his personal instrumentality in separating these fair colonies from Great Britain. Yet I dare not withhold from the memory of his talents, the tribute of respect to which they are so justly entitled. I am told that his general appearance and manners were those of a plain farmer or planter of the back country; that, in this character, he always entered on the exordium of an oration—dis-

qualifying himself, with looks and expressions of humility, so lowly and unassuming, as threw every heart off its guard, and induced his audience to listen to him, with the same easy openness with which they would converse with an honest neighbour :—but, by and by, when it was little expected, he would take a flight so high, and blaze with a splendour so heavenly, as filled them with a kind of religious awe; and gave him the force and authority of a prophet. You remember this was the manner of Ulysses ; commencing with a depressed look, and hesitating voice. Yet I dare say Mr. Henry was directed to it, not by the example of Ulysses, of which it is very probable, that at the commencement of his career, at least, he was entirely ignorant ;—but either that it was the genuine trembling diffidence, without which, if Tully may be believed, a great orator never rises ; or else that he was prompted to it by his own sound judgment and his intimate knowledge of the human heart. I have seen the skeletons of some of his orations. The periods, and their members, are short, quick, eager, palpitating, and are manifestly the extemporeaneous effusions of a mind deeply convicted, and a heart inflamed with zeal for the propagation of those convictions. They afford, however, a very inadequate sample of his talents ; the stenographer having never been tempted to follow him, when he arose in at-strength and awful majesty of his genius.

I am not a little surprised to find eloquence of this high order so negligently cultivated in the United States. Considering what a very powerful engine it is in a republick, and how peculiarly favourable to its culture, the climate of republicks has been always found, I expected to have seen in America, more votaries to Mercury than even to Plutus. Indeed it would be so sure a road both to wealth and honours, that if I coveted either, and were an American, I would bend all my powers to its acquirement, and try whether I could not succeed as well as Demosthenes, in vanquishing natural imperfections. Ah ! my dear S\*\*\*\*\*\*, were you a citizen of this country ! you, under the influence of whose voice a parliament of Great Britain has trembled and shuddered, while her refined and enlightened galleries have wept and fainted in the excess of feeling ! what might you not accomplish ! But, for the honour of my country, I am much better pleased that you are a Britain. On the subject of Virginian eloquence, you shall hear farther from me. In the mean time, adieu, my S\*\*\*\*\*\*, my friend, my father.

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LETTER V.

## BRITISH SPY.

### LETTER V.

RICHMOND, SEPTEMBER 23.

I HAVE just returned, my dear S\*\*\*\*\*\*, from an interesting morning's ride. My object was to visit the site of the Indian town, Powhatan, which you will remember was the metropolis of the dominions of Pocahuntas' father, and, very probably, the birthplace of that celebrated princess. The town was built on the river about two miles below the ground now occupied by Richmond; that is, about two miles below the head of tide water. The land whereon it stood is, at present, part of a beautiful and valuable farm belonging to a gentleman by the name of William Mayo.

Aware of the slight manner in which the Indians have always constructed their habitations, I was not at all disappointed in finding no vestige of the old town. But as I traversed the ground over which Pocahuntas had so often bounded and frolicked in the sprightly morning of her youth, I could not help recalling the principal features of her history, and heaving a sigh of mingled pity and veneration to her memory. Good Heav-

ay ! What an eventful life was hers ! To speak of nothing else, the arrival of the English in her father's dominions, must have appeared, (as, indeed, it turned out to be) a most portentous phenomenon. It is not easy for us to conceive the amazement and consternation which must have filled her mind, and that of her nation, at the first appearance of our countrymen. Their great ship, with all her sails spread, advancing in solemn majesty to the shore ; their complexion ; their dress ; their language ; their domestick animals ; their cargo of new and glittering wealth ; and then, the thunder and irresistible force of their artillery ; the distant country announced by them, far beyond the great water, of which the oldest Indian never heard, or thought, or dreamed—all this was so new, so wonderful, so tremendous, that I do seriously suppose, the personal descent of an army of Milton's celestial angels, robed in light, sporting the bright beams of the sun, and redoubling their splendour, making divine harmony with their golden harps, or playing with the bolt, and chasing the rapid lightning of heaven, would excite no more astonishment in Great-Britain, than did the debarkation of the English among the aborigines of Virginia.

Poor Indians !—Where are they now !—Indeed my dear S\*\*\*\*\*\*, this is a truly afflicting consideration. The people here may say what they please ; but on the principles

of eternal truth and justice, they have no right to this country. They say that they have bought it ; Bought it ! Yes ; of whom ? Of the poor trembling natives, who knew that refusal would be vain, and who strove to make a merit of necessity, by seeming to yield with a grace, what they knew they had not the power to retain. Such a bargain might appease the conscience of a gentleman of the green bag, "worn and hacknied" in the arts and frauds of his profession ; but in heaven's chancery, my S\*\*\*\*\*\*, there can be little doubt that it has been long since set aside on the ground of duresse. Poor wretches ! No wonder that they are so implacably vindictive against the white people ; no wonder that the rage of resentment is handed down from generation to generation ; no wonder that they refuse to associate and mix permanently with their unjust and cruel invaders and exterminators ; no wonder that, in the unabating spite and frenzy of conscious impotence, they wage an eternal war as well as they are able ;— that they triumph in the rare opportunity of revenge ; that they dance, sing and rejoice, as the victim shrieks and faints amid the flames, when they imagine all the crinies of their oppressors collected on his head, and fancy the spirits of their injured forefathers hovering over the scene, smiling, with ferocious delight at the grateful spectacle, and

feasting on the precious odour as it arises from the burning blood of the white man.

Yet the people, here, affect to wonder that the Indians are so very unsusceptible of civilization ; or, in other words, that they so obstinately refuse to adopt the manners of the white man. Go, Virginian ; erase from the Indian nation the tradition of their wrongs ; make them forget, if you can, that once this charming country was theirs ; that over these fields, and through these forests, their beloved forefathers, once, in careless gaiety, pursued their sports, and hunted their game ; that every returning day found them the sole, the peaceful, the happy proprietors of this extensive and beautiful domain ; Make them forget, too, if you can, that in the midst of all this innocence, simplicity and bliss, the white man came, and lo ! the animated chase, the feast, the dance, the song of fearless, thoughtless joy, were over ; that, ever since, they have been made to drink of the bitter cup of humiliation ; treated like dogs ; their lives, their liberties, the sport of the white men ; their country, and the graves of their fathers, torn from them in cruel succession ; until, driven from river to river, from forest to forest, and, through a period of two hundred years, rolled back, nation upon nation, they find themselves fugitives, vagrants and strangers in their own country, and look forward to the certain period when their descendants

will be totally extinguished by wars ; driven at the point of the bayonet, into the western ocean ; or reduced, still more deplorable and horrid, to the condition of slaves :—Go, administer the cup of oblivion to recollections and anticipations like these, and then you will cease to complain that the Indian refuses to be civilized. But, until then, surely it is nothing wonderful that a nation yet bleeding afresh from the memory of ancient wrongs, perpetually agonizing by new outrages, and goaded into desperation and madness at the prospect of the certain ruin which awaits their descendants, should hate the authors of their miseries, of their desolations, their destruction ; should hate their manners, hate their colour, their language, their name, and every thing that belongs to them. No, never, until time shall wear out the history of their sorrows and their sufferings, will the Indian be brought to love the white man, and to imitate his manners.

Great God ! To reflect, my \*\*\*\*\*\*, that the authors of all these wrongs were our own countrymen, our forefathers, professors of the meek and benevolent religion of Jesus ! O ! it was impious—it was unmanly—poor and pitiful ! Gracious Heaven ! what had these poor people done ? The simple inhabitants of these peaceful plains, what wrong, what injury, had they offered to the English ? my soul melts with pity and shame.

As for the present inhabitants, it must be granted that they are comparatively innocent ; unless, indeed, they, also, have encroached under the guise of treaties, which they themselves have previously contrived to render expedient or necessary to the Indians. Whether this has been the case or not, I am too much a stranger to the interior transactions of this country to decide. But it seems to me that were I a President of the United States, I would glory in going to the Indians, throwing myself on my knees before them and saying to them, " Indians, friends, " brothers, O ! forgive my countrymen ! " Deeply have our forefathers wronged you ; " and they have forced us to continue the " wrong. Reflect, brothers, it was not our " fault that we were born in your country ; " but now, we have no 'other home ; we " have no where else to rest our feet. Will " you not, then, permit us to remain ? Can " you not forgive even us, innocent as we " are ? If you can, O ! come to our bosoms ; " be, indeed, our brothers, and since there " is room enough for us all, give us a home " in your land and let us be children of the " same affectionate family." I believe that a magnanimity of sentiment like this, followed up by a correspondent greatness of conduct in the people of the United States, would go farther to bury the tomahawk and produce a fraternization with the Indians, than all the presents, treaties and missionaries

that can be employed ; dashed and defeated as these latter means always are, by a claim of rights on the part of the white people which the Indians know to be false and baseless. Let me not be told that the Indians are too dark and fierce to be affected by generous and noble sentiments. I will not believe it. Magnanimity can never be lost on a nation which has produced an Alknomack, a Logan and Pocahuntas.

The repetition of the name of this amiable princess brings me back to the point from which I have digressed. I wonder that the Virginians, fond as they are of anniversaries, have instituted no festival or order in honour to her memory. For my own part I have little doubt, from the histories which we have of the first attempts at colonizing their country, that Pocahuntas deserves to be considered as the patron deity of the enterprize. When it is remembered how long the colony struggled to get a footing ; how often sickness or famine, neglect at home, mismanagement here, and the hostilities of the natives brought it to the brink of ruin ; through what a tedious lapse of time, alternately languishing and revived, it sunk and rose, sometimes hanging like Addison's lamp. " quivering at a point," then suddenly shooting up into a sickly and short lived flame ; in one word, when we recollect how near and how often it verged towards total extinction, maugre the patronage of Pocahuntas, there is the

strongest reason to believe that, but for her patronage, the anniversary cannon of the fourth of July would never have resounded throughout the United States.

Is it not probable that this sensible and amiable woman, perceiving the superiority of the Europeans, foreseeing the probability of the subjugation of her countrymen, and anxious, as well to soften their destiny as to save the needless effusion of blood, desired, by her marriage with Mr. Rolfe, to hasten the abolition of all distinction between Indians and white men ; to bind their interests and affections by the nearest and most endearing ties, and to make them regard themselves, as one people, the children of the same great family ? If such were her wise and benevolent views, and I have no doubt that they were, how poorly were they backed by the British Court ? No wonder at the resentment and indignation with which she saw them neglected ; no wonder at the bitterness of the disappointment and vexation which she expressed to Capt. Smith, in London, arising as well from the cold reception which she herself had met, as from the contemptuous and insulting point of view in which she found that her nation was regarded. Unfortunate Princess ! She deserved a happier fate ! But I am consoled by these reflections ; first, that she sees her descendants among the most respectable families in Virginia ; and that they are not only superi-

our to the false shame of disavowing her as their ancestor, but that they pride themselves, and with reason too, on the honour of their descent: Secondly—that she herself has gone to a country, where she finds her noble wishes realized; where the distinction of colour is no more, but where indeed, it is perfectly immaterial, “what complexion an Indian or an African sun may have burnt” on the pilgrim.

Adieu, my dear S\*\*\*\*\*. This train of thought has destroyed the tone of my spirits; when I recover them, you shall hear further from me. Once more, adieu.

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LETTER VI.

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## BRITISH SPY.

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### LETTER VI.

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RICHMOND, SEPTEMBER 23.

I HAVE been, my dear S\*\*\*\*\*\*, on an excursion through the countries which lie along the eastern side of the Blue Ridge. A general description of that country and its inhabitants may form the subject of a future letter. For the present, I must entertain you with an account of a most singular and interesting adventure which I met with in the course of the tour.

It was on Sunday as I travelled through the county of Orange, that my eye was caught by a cluster of horses tied near a ruinous old wooden house in the forest not far from the road side. Having frequently seen such objects before, in travelling through these States, I had no difficulty in understanding that this was a place of religious worship. Devotion alone should have stopped me to join in the duties of the congregation; but I must confess that curiosity to hear the preacher of such a wilderness, was not the least of my motives. On entering, I was struck with his preternatural appearance. He was a tall and very spare old man—his head, which

was covered with a white linen cap, his shrivelled hands, and his voice, all shaking under the influence of a palsy, in a few moments ascertained to me that he was perfectly blind. The first emotions which touched my breast were those of mingled pity and veneration. But ah ! Sacred God ! How soon were all my feelings changed ! The lips of Plato were never more worthy a prognostick swarm of bees, than were the lips of this holy man ! It was a day of the administration of the sacrament, and his subject, of course, was the passion of our Saviour. I had heard the subject handled a thousand times : I had thought it exhausted long ago. Little did I suppose that in the wild woods of America I was to meet with a man whose eloquence would give to this topick a new and sublimer pathos than I had ever before witnessed. As he descended from the pulpit to distribute the mystick symbol there was a peculiar, a more than usual solemnity in his air and manner, which made my blood run cold and my whole frame to shiver. He then drew a picture of our Saviour—his trial before Pilate—his ascent up Calvary—his crucifixion, and his death. I knew the whole history ; but never until then had I heard the circumstances so selected, so arranged, so coloured ! It was all new ; and I seemed to have heard it for the first time in my life. His enunciation was so deliberate, that his voice trembled on every syllable : and every heart trembled in unison. His pecu-

iliar phrases had that force of description, that the original scene appeared to be at that moment acting before our eyes. We saw the very faces of the Jews—the staring, frightful distortions of malice and rage. We saw the buffet—my soul kindled with a flame of indignation, and my hands were involuntarily and convulsively clenched.—But when he came to touch the patience, the forgiving meekness of our Saviour—when he drew, to the life, his blessed eyes streaming in tears to heaven, his voice breathing to God a soft and gentle prayer of pardon on his enemies “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do”—the voice of the preacher, which had, all along, grown fainter and fainter, until his utterance being entirely obstructed by the force of his feelings, he raised his handkerchief to his eyes, and burst into a loud and irrepressible flood of grief. The effect is inconceivable. The whole house resounded with the mingled groans and sobs and shrieks of the congregation. It was some time before the tumult had subsided so far as to permit him to proceed. Indeed, judging by the usual but fallacious standard of my own weakness, I began to be very uneasy for the situation of the preacher. For I could not conceive how he would be able to let his audience down from the height to which he had wound them, without impairing the solemnity and dignity of the subject, or perhaps shocking them by the abruptness of the

fall. But—no : the descent was as beautiful and sublime, as the elevation had been rapid and enthusiastick. The first sentence with which he broke the awful silence was a quotation from Rousseau : “ Socrates died like a philosopher, but Jesus Christ like a God ! ” I despair of giving you any idea of the effect produced by this short sentence, unless you could perfectly conceive the whole manner of the man, as well as the peculiar crisis in the discourse. Never before did I completely understand what Demosthenes means by laying such stress on *delivery*.

You are to bring before you the venerable figure of the preacher—his blindness, constantly recalling to your recollection old Homer, Ossian and Milton and associating with his performance, the melancholy grandeur of their geniuses, you are to imagine that you hear his slow, solemn, well accented enunciation, and his voice of affecting, trembling melody—you are to remember the pitch of passion and enthusiasm to which the congregation were raised—and then the few minutes of portentous, deathlike silence which reigned throughout the house—the preacher removing his white handkerchief from his aged face (even yet wet from the recent torrent of his tears) & slowly stretching forth the palsied hand which holds it, begins the sentence—“ Socrates died like a philosopher”—and then pausing, raised his other, pressing them both, clasped together, with warmth and en-

ergy to his breast, lifting his "sightless balls" to heaven, and pouring his whole soul into his tremulous voice—"but Jesus Christ—like a God!"—If he had been indeed and in truth an angel of light, the effect could scarcely have been more divine. Whatever I had been able to conceive the sublimity of Massillon, or the force of Bourdaloue, had fallen far short of the power which I feel from the delivery of this simple sentence. The blood which, just before, had rushed in a torrent upon my brain, and in the violence and agony of my feeling had held my whole system in suspense, now ran back into my heart with a sensation which I cannot describe; a kind of shuddering, delicious horrour! The paroxysm of blended pity and indignation, to which I had been transported, subsided in the deepest fell abasement, humility and adoration! I had just been lacerated and dissolved by sympathy for our Saviour as a fellow creature; but now, with fear and trembling, I adored him as—a "God!"

If this description gives you the impression that this incomparable minister had any thing of shallow, theatrical trick in his manner, it does him great injustice. I have never seen in any other orator, such an union of simplicity and majesty. He has not a gesture, an attitude, an accent, to which he does not seem forced by the sentiment which he is expressing. His mind is too serious, too earnest, too solicitous, and, at the same time,

too dignified, to stoop to artifice. Although as far removed from ostentation as a man can be, yet it is clear from the train, the style and substance of his thoughts, that he is not only a very polite scholar, but a man of extensive and profound erudition. I was forcibly struck with a short, yet beautiful character which he drew of our learned and amiable countryman, Sir Robert Boyle : he spoke of him, as if “ his noble mind had, even before death, divested herself of all influence, from his frail tabernacle of flesh ;” and called him, in his peculiar emphatick and impressive manner, “ a pure intelligence—the link between men and angels !”

This man has been before my imagination almost ever since. A thousand times, as I rode along, I dropped the reins of my bridle, stretched forth my hand, and tried to imitate his quotation from Rousseau ; a thousand times I abandoned the attempt in despair, and felt persuaded that his peculiar manner and power arose from an energy of soul which Nature could give, but which no human Being could justly copy. In short, he seems to be altogether a being of a former age, or of a totally different nature from the rest of men.

As I recall at this moment several of his awfully striking attitudes, the chilling tide with which my blood begins to pour along my arteries, reminds me of the emotions produced by the first sight of Gray's introductory picture of his bard :

BRITISH SPY.

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On a rock, whose hantgy brow  
frowns o'er old Conway's foaming flood,  
reb'd in the sable garb of woe,  
with haggard eyes the poet stood,  
(loose his beard and hoary hair  
stream'd like a meteor to the troubled air !)  
and with a Poet's hand and Prophet's fire,  
struck the deep sorrow on his lyre.

Guess my surprise when, on my arrival at Richmond, and mentioning the name of this man, I found not one person who had ever before heard of JAMES WADDELL. Is it not strange that such a genius as this, so accomplished a scholar, so divine an orator, should be permitted to languish and die in obscurity, within eight miles of the metropolis of Virginia ?

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LETTER VII.

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## BRITISH SPY.

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### LETTER VI.

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RICHMOND, OCTOBER 15.

MEN of talents in this country, my dear S\*\*\*\*\*\*, have been generally bred to the profession of the law ; and indeed, throughout the United States, I have met with few persons of exalted intellect, whose powers have been directed to any other pursuit. The bar, in America, is the road to honour ; and hence, although the profession is graced by the most shining geniuses on the continent, it is encumbered also by a melancholy group of young men who hang on the rear of the bar, like Goethe's sable clouds in the western horizon. I have been told that the bar of Virginia was a few years ago pronounced, by the Supreme Court of the United States, to be the most enlightened and able on the Continent. I am very incompetent to decide on the merit of their legal acquirements ; but, putting aside the partiality of a Briton, I do not think either of the gentlemen by any means so eloquent or so erudite as our countryman, Erskine. With your permission, however, I will make you better acquainted

with the few characters who lead the van of the profession.

Mr. \*\*\*\*\* has great personal advantages, a figure large and portly; his features uncommonly fine; his whole countenance lighted up with an expression of the most conciliating sensibility; his attitudes dignified and commanding; his gestures easy and graceful; his voice perfect harmony; and his whole manner that of an accomplished and engaging gentleman. I have reason to believe that the expression of his countenance does no more than justice to his heart. If I am correctly informed, his feelings are exquisite; and the proofs of his benevolence are various and clear beyond the possibility of doubt. He has filled the highest offices in this commonwealth, and has very long maintained a most respectable rank in his profession. His character, with the people, is that of a great lawyer and an eloquent speaker; —and, indeed so many men of discernment and taste entertain this opinion, and my prepossessions in his favour are so strong on account of the amiable qualities of his character, that I am very well disposed to doubt the accuracy of my own judgment as it relates to him.

To me, however, it seems that his mind, as is often, but not invariably the case, corresponds with his personal appearance; that it is turned rather for ornament than for severe use. His speeches, I think, deserve the cen-

sure which Lord Verulam pronounces on the writers, posterior to the reformation of the church. "Luther," says he, "standing alone against the church of Rome, found it necessary to awake all antiquity in his behalf; this introduced the study of the dead languages, a taste for the fulness of the Ciceronian manner, and hence the still prevalent error of hunting more after the choiceness of the phrase and the round and clean composition of the sentence, and the sweet fallings of the clauses, and the varying and illustration of their works with tropes and figures, than after the weight of matter, worth of subject, soundness of argument, life of invention, or depth of judgment." Mr. \_\_\_\_\_'s temper and habits lead him to the swelling, stately manner of Bolingbroke; but either from want of promptitude and richness of conception, or his sedulous concern and "hunting after words," he does not maintain that manner smoothly and happily.—On the contrary, the spirits of his hearers, after having been awakened and put into sweet and pleasant motion, have their tide not unfrequently checked, ruffled and painfully obstructed, by the hesitation and perplexity of the speaker. It certainly must demand, my S\*\*\*\*\*\*, a mind of very high powers to support the swell of Bolingbroke, with felicity. The tones of voice which naturally belong to it, keep the expectation continually "on tiptoe;" and this must be gratified not only by

the most oily fluency, but by a force of argument, clear as light, and an alternate play of imagination as grand and magnificent as Herschell's dance of the sidereal system.—

The work requires to be perpetually urged forward. One interruption in the current of the language—one poor thought or abortion of fancy—one vacant aversion of the eye or relaxation in the expression of face, entirely breaks and dissolves the whole charm. The speaker, indeed, may go on and evolve, here and there, a pretty thought ; but the wondrous magick of the whole, is gone forever.

Whether it be from any defect in the organization of Mr. \_\_\_\_\_'s mind, or that his passion for the fine dress of his thoughts, is the master passion, which like “ Aaron's serpent, swallows up the rest,” I will not undertake to decide ; but perhaps it results from one of those two causes, that all the arguments which I have ever heard from him, are defective in that important and most material character, the *lucidus ordo*. I have been sometimes inclined to believe that a man's division of his arguments should be generally found to contain a secret history of the difficulties which he himself has encountered in the investigation of his subject. I am firmly persuaded, that the extreme prolixity of many discourses to which we are doomed to listen, is chargeable not to the fertility, but to the darkness and impotence

of the brain which produces them. A man who sees his object in a strong light, marches directly up to it in a right line, with the firm step of a soldier ; while another, residing in a less illumined zone, wanders and reels in the twilight of the brain, and ere he attains his object, treads a maze as intricate and perplexing as that of the celebrated labyrinth of Crete. It was remarkable of the \*\*\*\*\* of the United States, whom I mentioned to you in a former letter as looking through a subject at a glance, that he almost invariably seized one strong point only, the pivot of the controversy ; this point he would enforce with all his power, never permitting his own mind to waver, nor obscuring those of the hearers, by a cloud of inferior, unimportant considerations. But this is not the manner of Mr. \*\*\*\*\*, I suspect, that in the preparatory investigation of a subject, he gains his ground by slow and laborious gradations, and that his difficulties are numerous and embarrassing.

Hence it is, perhaps, that his points are generally too multifarious ; and although among the rest he exhibits the strong point, its appearance is too often like that of Issachar, " bowed down between two burdens." I take this to be a very ill judged method. It may serve indeed to make the multitude stare, but it frustrates the great purpose of the speaker. Instead of giving a simple, lucid and animated view of a subject, it overloads, con-

ounds and fatigues the listener. Instead of leaving him the vivacity of clear and full conviction, it leaves him wildered, darkling, asleep ; and when he awakes, he

“—Wakes emerging from a sea of dreams,  
“ tumultuous ; where his wreck'd desponding thought,  
“ from wave to wave of wild uncertainty  
“ at random drove, her helm of reason lost.”

I incline to believe that if there be a blemish in the mind of this amiable gentleman, it is the want of a strong and masculine judgment. If such an agent had wielded the sceptre of his understanding, it is presumable that ere this, it would have chastised his exuberant fondness for literary finery, and unfortunate parade of points in his argument, on which I have commented. If I may confide in the replies which I have heard given to him at the bar, this want of judgment is sometimes manifested in his selection and application of the law cases. But of this I can judge, only from the triumphant air with which his adversaries seize his cases ; and appear to turn them against him. He is certainly a man of close and elaborate research. It would seem to me, however, my dear S\*\*\*\*\*\*, that in order to constitute a scientifick lawyer, something more is necessary than the patient and the persevering revolution of the leaves of an author. Does it not require a discernment sufficiently clear and strong to eviscerate the principles of each case ; a judgment potent

enough to digest, connect and systematize them, and to distinguish at once, in any future combination of circumstances, the feature which gives or refuses to a principle a just application.—Without such intellectual properties, I should conjecture (for on this subject I can only conjecture) that a man could not have the fair advantage and perfect command of his reading. For in the first place, I should apprehend that he would never discover the application of a case, without the reoccurrence of all the same circumstances ; in the next place that his cases would form a perfect chaos, a *rudis indigestaque moles*, in his brains ; and lastly that he would often, and sometimes perhaps fatally, mistake the indentifying feature, and furnish his antagonist with a formidable weapon against himself.

But let me fly from this entangled wilderness of which I have so little knowledge, and conclude with Mr.\*\*\*\*\*. Although when brought to the standard, of perfect oratory, he may be subject to the censures I have passed on him ; yet it is to be acknowledged, and I make the acknowledgment with pleasure, that he is a man of extensive reading, a well informed lawyer, a fine belles lettres scholar, and sometimes a beautiful speaker.

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LETTER VIII.

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## BRITISH SPY.

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### LETTER VIII.

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JAMESTOWN, SEPTEMBER 27.

I HAVE taken a pleasant ride of sixty miles down the river, in order, my dear S\*\*\*\*\*\*, to see the remains of the first English settlement in Virginia. The site is a very handsome one.—The river is three miles broad; and, on the opposite shore, the country presents a fine range of bold and beautiful hills. But I find no vestiges of the ancient town, except the ruins of a church steeple, and a disordered group of old tomb stones. On one of these, shaded by the boughs of a tree whose trunk has embraced and grown over the edge of the stone, and seated on the headstone of another grave, I now address you. What a moment for a lugubrious meditation among the tombs; but fear not; I have neither the temper nor the genius of a Harvey; and, as much as I revere his pious memory, I cannot envy him the possession of such a genius and such a temper. For my own part, I would not have suffered the mournful pleasure of writing this book and Dr. Young's *Night Thoughts*, for all the just fame which

detect the lurking Indian, with his tomahawk, bow and arrow.—Good Heavens ! What an enterprize !—How full of the most fearful perils ; and yet how entirely profitless to the daring men who personally undertook and atchieved it !! Through what a series of the most spirit chilling hardships had they to toil ? How often did they cast their eyes to England in vain ; and with what delusive hopes, day after day, did the little famished crew strain their sight to catch the white sail of comfort and relief ! But day after day, the sun sat and darkness covered the earth ; but no sail of comfort or relief came. How often in the pangs of hunger, sickness, solitude and disconsolation, did they think of London ; her shops, her markets groaning under the weight of plenty, her streets swarming with gilded coaches, bustling hacks and with crouds of lords, dukes and commons with healthy, busy contented faces, of every description, and among them none more healthy or more contented than those of their ungrateful and improvident directors ! But now—where are they, all—the little famished colony which landed here, and the many coloured croud of London—where are they, my dear S\*\*\*\*\* ? Gone, where there is no distinction ; consigned to the common earth. Another generation succeeded them ; which, just as busy and as bustling as that which fell before it, has sunk down into the same nothingness.—Another

and yet another billow has rolled on, each emulating its predecessor in height; towering, for its moment, and curling its foaming honours to the clouds, men roaring, breaking and perishing on the same shores.

Is it not strange that, familiarly and universally as these things are known, each generation is as eager in the pursuit of its earthly objects, projects its plan on a scale as extensive, and labours in their execution with a spirit as ardent and unrelaxing as if this life and this world were to last for ever? —It is indeed a most benevolent interposition of Providence, that these palpable and just views of the vanity of human life, are not permitted entirely to crush the spirits and unnerve the arm of industry. But at the same time, methinks it would be wise in man to permit them to have, at least, so much weight with him as to prevent his total absorption by the things of this earth, and to point some of his thoughts and his exertions to a system of being, far more permanent, exalted and happy. Think not this reflection too solemn. It is irresistibly inspired by the objects around me, and, as rarely as it occurs (much too rarely) it is most certainly and solemnly true, my S\*\*\*\*\*.

It is curious to reflect what a nation in the course of two hundred years, has sprung up and flourished from the feeble, sickly germ which was planted here! Little did our short-sighted court suspect the conflict which she

was preparing for herself ; the convulsive throe by which her infant colony would, in a few years, burst from her, and start into a political importance that would astonish the earth !—But Virginia, my dear S\*\*\*\*\*\*, as rapidly as her population and her wealth must continue to advance, wants one most important source of solid grandeur ; and that, too, the animating soul of a republick. I mean, public spirit, that sacred *armor patriæ*, which filled Greece and Rome with patriots, heroes and scholars. There seems to me to be but one object throughout the state ; *to grow rich* ; a passion which is visible not only in the walks of private life, but which has crept into and poisoned every public body in the state. Indeed from the very genius of the government, by which all the publick characters are at short, periodical elections, evolved from the body of the people, it cannot but happen that the councils of the state must take the impulse of the private propensities of the country.—Hence Virginia exhibits no great publick improvements ; hence, in spite of her wealth, every part of the country manifests her sufferings either from the penury of her guardians, or their want of that attention, and noble pride wherewith it is their duty to consult her appearance. Her roads and highways are frequently impassable, sometimes frightful—the very few publick works which have been set on foot, instead of being carried on with spirit, are per-

mitted to languish and pine and creep feebly along, in such a manner that the first part of an edifice grows grey with age and almost tumbles in ruins, before the last part is lifted from the dust—highest offices are sustained with so avaricious, so niggardly a hand, that if they are not driven to subsist on roots, and drink ditch water with old Fabricus, it is not for the want of republican economy in the projectors of the salaries—and, above all, the general culture of the human mind, that best cure for the aristocratick distinctions which they profess to love ; this culture, instead of becoming a national care, is entrusted merely to such individuals as hazard, indigence, misfortunes or crimes, have forced from their native Europe to seek an asylum and bread in the wilds of America. They have only one publick seminary of learning ; a college at Williamsburg, about seven miles from this place, which was erected in the reign of our William and Mary, and bears their name. This college, in the fastidious folly and affectation of republicanism, they have endowed with a few despicable fragments of surveyor's fees, &c. converting a body of polite, scientifick and highly respectable professors, into a shop board of contemptible *cabbaging taylors*.

And, then, instead of aiding and energizing the police of the college, by a few civil regulations, permitting their youth to run and riot in all the wildness of dissipation ; while

the venerable professors are forced to look on in the deep mortification of conscious impotence, and see their care and zeal requited, by the ruin of their pupils and the destruction of their seminary. These are points which, at present, I can barely touch ; when I have an easier seat and writing desk, than a grave and a tomb stone, it will give me pleasure to dilate on them ; for it will afford an opportunity of exulting in the superiority of our own energetick monarchy over this republican body without a soul.

For the present, my dear S\*\*\*\*\*\*, I bid you adieu.

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LETTER IX.

BRITISH SPY.

LETTER IX.

LICHFIELD, OCTOBER 30.

TALENTS, my dear S\*\*\*\*\*\*, wherever they have had a suitable theatre, have never failed to emerge from obscurity and assume their proper rank in the estimation of the world. The celebrated Catiden is said to have been the tenant of a garret. Yet from the darkness, poverty and ignominy of this residence, he advanced to distinction and wealth, and graced the first offices and titles of our island.—It is impossible to turn over the British Biography without being struck and charmed by the multitude of correspondent examples; a venerable groupe of *novi homines* as the Romans called them; men, who, from the lowest depths of obscurity and want, and without even the influence of a patron, have risen to the first honours of their country, and founded their own families anew. In every nation and in every age, great talents, thrown fairly into the point of publick observation, will, invariably produce the same ultimate effect. The jealous pride of power may attempt to re-

press and crush them ; the base and malignant rancour of impotent spleen and envy may strive to embarrass and retard their flight : but these efforts, so far from achieving their ignoble purpose, so far from producing a discernible obliquity in the ascent of genuine and vigorous talents, will serve only to increase their momentum and mark their transit with an additional stream of glory. When the great earl of Chatham first made his appearance in our house of Commons, and began to astonish and transport the British Parliament and the British nation, by the boldness, the force, and range of his thoughts, and the celestial fire and pathos of his eloquence, it is well known that the minister, Walpole, and his brother Horace (from motives very easily understood) exerted all their wit, all their oratory, all their acquirements of every description, sustained and enforced by the unfeeling "insolence of office," to heave a mountain on his gigantick genius and hide it from the world. Poor and powerless attempt !—The tables were turned. He rose upon them in the might and irresistible energy of his genius, and in spite of all their convolutions, frantick agonies and spasms, he strangled them and their whole faction with as much ease, as Hercules did the serpent Python. Who can turn over the debates of the day, and read the account of this conflict between youthful ardour and hoary headed cunning and power, without

kindling in the cause of the tyro and shouting at his victory ? That they should have attempted to pass off the grand, yet solid and judicious operation of a mind like his, as being mere theatrical start and emotion ; the giddy, hair-brained eccentricities of a romantick boy ! That they should have the presumption to suppose themselves capable of chaining down to the floor of the parliament, a genius so ethereal, towering, and sublime ! Why did they not, in the next breath, by way of crowning the climax of vanity, bid the magnificent fire-ball to descend from its exalted and appropriate region, and perform its splendid tour along the surface of the earth ?\* When the son of this great man, too, our present minister, and his compeer and rival, our friend, first commenc-

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\* See a beautiful note in DARWIN'S Botanick Garden, in which the writer suggests the probability of three concentric strata of our atmosphere, in which, or between them, are produced four kind of meteors ; in the lowest the common lightning ; in the next, shooting stars ; and the highest region, which he supposes to consist of inflammable gas, ten fold lighter than the common atmospherick air, he makes the theatre of the northern light, and fire ball or drace volans. He recites the history of one of the latter, seen in the year 1768, which was estimated to have been a mile and a half in circumference ; to have been 100 miles high, and to have moved 30 miles in a second. It had a real tail many miles long, which threw off sparks in its course, and the whole exploded like that of distant thunder. Bot. Garden. Part 1. add. note 1.

ed their political career, the publick papers teemed with strictures on their respective talents; the first was censured as being merely a dry and even a slimy reasoner; the last was stigmatized as an empty declaimer. But error and misrepresentation soon expire and are forgotten: while truth rises upon their ruins and "flourishes in eternal youth." Thus the false, the light, fugacious newspaper criticisms which attempted to dissect and censure the arrangement of those gentlemen's talents, have been long since swept away by the besom of oblivion. They wanted Truth, that soul, which alone, can secure immortality from any literary work. And Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox have, for many years, been, reciprocally and alternately recognized, just as their subject demands it, either as close and cogent reasoners or as beautiful and superb rhetoricians. Talents, therefore, which are before the publick, have nothing to dread either from the jealous pride of power, or from the transient misrepresentations of party, spleen, or envy. In spite of oppression from any cause, their buoyant spirit will lift them to their proper grade—it will be unjust that it should lift them higher.

It is true there always are and always will be in every society, individuals, who will fancy themselves examples of genius overlooked, under-rated or invidiously oppressed. But the misfortune of such persons is imputable to their own vanity, and not to the pub-

lick opinion which has weighed and graduated them. We remember many of our school mates whose geniuses bloomed and died within the walls of ALMA MATER ; but whose bodies still live, the moving monuments of departed splendour, the animated and affecting remembrances of the extreme fragility of the human intellect. We remember others who have entered on publick life with the most exulting promise ; have flown from the earth, like rockets ; and after a short and brilliant flight ; have bursted with one or two explosions...to blaze no more.

Others by a few premature scintillations of thought have led themselves and their partial friends to hope that they were fast advancing to a dawn of soft and beauteous light and a meridian of bright and gorgeous effulgence. But their day has never yet broken, and never will it break. They are doomed forever to that dim, crepuscular light which surrounds the frozen poles, when the sun has retreated to the opposite circle of the heavens. Their's is the eternal glimmering of the brain ; and their most luminous displays are the faint twinklings of the glow-worm. We have seen others, who, at their start, gain a casual projectility which raises them above their proper grade ; but, by the just operation of their specifick gravity, they are made to subside again and settle ultimately in the sphere to which they properly belong. All these characters, and many others who have

had even slighter bases for their once sanguine; but now blasted hopes, form a querulous and melancholy band of moon-struck declaimers against the injustice of the world, the agency of envy, the force of destiny, &c. charging their misfortune on every thing but the true cause: their own want of intrinsick, sterling merit; their want of that copious, perennial spring of great and useful thought, without which a man may hope in vain, for growing reputation.—Nor are they always satisfied with wailing their own destiny, pouring out the bitterest imprecations of their souls on the cruel stars which presided at their birth, and aspersing the justice of the publick opinion which has scaled them: too often in the contortions and pangs of disappointed ambition; they cast a seowling eye over the world of man—start back, and blanche at the lustre of superiour merit—and exert all the diabolical incantations of their black art to conjure up an impervious vapour, in order to shroud its glories from the world. But it is all in vain. In spite of every thing, the publick opinion will finally do justice to us all. The man who comes fairly before the world, and who possesses the great and vigorous stamina which entitle him to a niche in the temple of glory, has no reason to dread the ultimate result; however slow his progress may be, he will, in the end, most indubitably receive that distinction. While the rest, “the swallows of sci-

ence," the butterflies of genius may flutter for their spring ; but they will soon pass away and be remembered no more. No enterprising man, therefore, (and, least of all, the truly great man) has reason to droop, or repine at any efforts which he may suppose to be made with the view to depress him ; since he may rely on the universal and unchanging truth, that talents, which are before the world, will most inevitably find their proper level ; and this is certainly all that a just man should desire. — Let, then, the tempest of envy or malice howl around him. His genius will consecrate him ; and any attempt to extinguish that, will be as unavailing, as would a human effort, "to quench the stars."

I have been led farther into these reflections than I had anticipated. The train was started by casting my eyes over Virginia ; observing the very few who have advanced on the theatre of publick observation, and the very many, who will remain forever behind the scenes. What frequent instances of high, native genius, have I seen springing in the wildnesses of this country ; genius, whose blossoms the light of science have never courted into expansion ; genius which is doomed to fall and die, far from the notice and the haunts of men ! How often, as I have held my way through the western forests of this state, and reflected on the vigorous shoots, of superior intellect which were freezing and perishing there for want of culture—how

often have I recalled the moment when our pathetick GRAY, reclining under the moulder ing elm of his country church yard, while the sigh of genial sympathy broke from his heart, and the tear of noble pity started in his eye, exclaimed,

“ Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid  
some heart once pregnant with celestial fire,  
hands that the rod of empire might have sway’d,  
or wak’d to ecstacy the living lyre.

But knowledge to their eyes, her ample page,  
rich with the spoils of time, did ne’er unroll;  
chill penury repress’d their noble rage,  
and froze the genial current of their soul.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene,  
the dark, unfathom’d waves of ocean bear;  
full many a flow’r is born to blush, unseen,  
and waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Some village Hampden, that, with dauntless breast,  
the little tyrant of his fields withstood;  
some mute, inglorious Milton, here may rest;  
some Cromwell, guiltless of his country’s blood.

Th’ applause of list’ning senatea to command,  
the threats of pain and ruin to despise,  
to scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,  
*and read their history in a nation’s eye.*  
their lot forbade :”—

The heart of a philanthropist, no matter to what country or what form of government he may belong, immediately inquires—“ and is there no mode to prevent this melancholy

waste of talents ? Is there no mode by which the rays of science might be so diffused over the state, as to call forth each latent bud into life and luxuriance?" There is such a mode ; and what renders the legislature of this state still more inexcusable, the plan by which these important purposes might be effected has been drawn out and has lain by them for nearly thirty years. The declaration of the independence of this commonwealth was made in the month of May, 1776. In the fall of that year, a statute, or as it is called here, " an act of Assembly" was made, providing that a committee of five persons should be appointed to prepare a code of laws, adapted to the change of the state government. This code was to be submitted to the legislature of the country and to be ratified or rejected by their suffrage. In the ensuing November, by a resolution of the same legislature, Thomas Jefferson, Edmund Pendleton, George Wythe, George Mason, and Thomas Ludwell Lee, Esquires, were appointed a committee to execute the work in question. It was prepared by the three first named gentlemen ; the first of them, now the President of the United States ; the second, the President of the Supreme Court of Appeals to Virginia ; and the third the Judge of the High Court of Chancery, at this place. I have perused this system of state police, with admiration. It is evidently the work of minds of most astonishing greatness ; capable

at once of a grand, profound and comprehensive survey of the present and future interest and glory of the whole state; and of pursuing that interest and glory through all the remote and minute ramifications of the most extensive and elaborate detail. Among other wise and highly patriotick bills which are proposed, there is one, For the more general diffusion of knowledge. After a preamble, in which the importance of the subject to the republick is most ably and eloquently announced, the bill proposes a simple and beautiful scheme, whereby science (like justice under the institutions of our Alfred) "would have been carried to every man's door." Genius instead of having to break its way through the thick opposing clouds of native obscurity, indigence and ignorance, was to be sought for through every family in the commonwealth; the sacred spark, wherever it was detected, was to be tenderly cherished, and fanned into a flame; its innate properties and tendencies were to be developed and examined, and then cautiously and judiciously invested with all the auxiliary energy and radiance of which their character was susceptible. What a plan was here to give stability and solid glory to the republick! If you ask me why it has never been adopted, I answer that, as a foreigner, I can perceive no possible reason for it, except that the comprehensive views and generous patriotism which produced the bill, have not prevailed throughqut the coun-

try, nor presided in the body on whose vote the adoption of that bill depended. I have new reason to remark it, almost every day, that there is throughout Virginia a most deplorable destitution of publick spirit of the noble pride and love of country. Unless the body of the people can be awakened from this fatal apathy ; unless their thoughts, and their feelings can be urged beyond the narrow confidence of their own private affairs ; unless they can be strongly inspired with the publick zeal, the *amor patriæ* of the ancient republick, the national embellishment and the national grandeur of this opulent state, must be reserved for very distant ages.

Adieu my S\*\*\*\*\* ; perhaps you will hear from me again, before I leave Richmond.

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LETTER X.

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## BRITISH SPY.

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### LETTER X.

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RICHMOND, DECEMBER 10.

IN one of my late rides into the surrounding country, I stopped at a little inn, to refresh myself and horse ; and as the landlord was neither a Boniface nor “mine host of the garter,” I called for a book, by way of killing time, while the preparations for my repast were going forward. He brought me a shattered fragment of the second volume of the Spectator, which he told me was the only book in the house, for “he never troubled his head about reading ;” and by the way of conclusive proof, he farther informed me, that this fragment, the only book in the house, had been sleeping, unmolested, in the dust of his mantle-piece for ten or fifteen years. I could not meet my venerable countryman in a foreign land, and in this humiliating plight, nor hear of the inhuman and gothick contempt with which he had been treated, without the liveliest emotion. So I read my host a lecture on the subject ; to which he appeared to pay as little attention as he had before done to the Spectator and

with the *sang froid* of a Dutchman, answered me, in the cant of the country, that he "had other fish to fry," and left me.

It had been so long, since I had an opportunity of opening that agreeable collection, that the few numbers now left before me, appeared entirely new ; and I cannot describe to you the avidity and delight with which I devoured those beautiful and interesting speculations. Is it not strange, my dear S\*\*\*\*\*\*, that such a work should have ever lost an inch of ground ? A style so sweet and simple ; and yet so ornamented ! A temper so benevolent, so cheerful, so exhilarating ! A body of knowledge, and of original thought, so immense and various ! So strikingly just, so universally useful ! What person, of any sex, temper, calling, or pursuit, can possibly converse with the Spectator, without being conscious of immediate improvement ? To the spleen, he is a perpetual and never failing antidote, as he is to ignorance and immorality.—No matter for the disposition of mind in which you take him up ; you smile at the wit, laugh at the drollery, feel your mind enlightened, your heart opened, softened and refined, and when you lay him down you are sure to be in better humour both with yourself and every body else. I have never mentioned the subject to a reader of the Spectator, who did not admit this to be the invariable process : and in such a world of misfortunes, of cares, and

sorrows, and guilt as this is, what a prize would this collection be, if it were rightly estimated ! Were I the sovereign of a nation which spoke the English language and wished my subjects cheerful, virtuous and enlightened, I would furnish every poor family in my dominions (and see that the rich furnish themselves) with a copy of the Spectator ; and ordain that the parents or children should read four or five numbers, aloud, every night in the year. For one of the peculiar perfections of the work is, that while it contains such a mass of ancient and modern learning, so much of profound wisdom and of beautiful composition, yet there is scarcely a number throughout the eight volumes which is not level to the meanest capacity. Another perfection is, that the Spectator will never become tiresome to any one whose taste and whose heart remain uncorrupted.

I do not mean that this author should be read to the exclusion of others ;—much less that he should stand in the way of the generous pursuit of science, or interrupt the discharge of social or private duties. All the counsels of the work itself have a directly reverse tendency. It furnishes a store of the clearest argument and of the most amiable and captivating exhortations, “ to raise the genius and to mend the heart.” I regret, only, that such a book should be thrown by, and almost entirely forgotten, while the gilded blasphemies of infidels and “ noon-tide

traces" of pernicious theorists are hailed with rapture and echoed around the world. For such, I should be pleased to see the Spectator universally substituted; and, throwing out of the question its morality, its literary information, its sweetly contagious serenity, and the pure and chaste beauties of its style; and considering it merely as a curiosity, as centering the brilliant sports of the finest cluster of geniuses that ever graced the earth, it surely deserves perpetual attention, respect and consecration.

There is, methinks, my \$\*\*\*\*\*\*, a great fault in the world as it respects this subject; a giddy instability, a light and fluttering vanity, a prurient longing after novelty, an impatience, a disgust, a fastidious contempt of every thing that is old. You will not understand me as censuring the progress of sound science. I am not so infatuated an antiquarian, nor so poor a philanthropist as to seek to retard the expansion of the human mind. But I lament the eternal oblivion into which our old authors, those giants of literature, are permitted to sink, while the world stands open-eyed and open-mouthed, to catch every modern, tinsel'd abortion, as it falls from the press. In the small circles of America for instance, perhaps there is no want of taste and even zeal for letters. I have seen several gentlemen who appear to have an accurate, a minute acquaintance with the whole range of literature in its present

state of improvement ; yet you will be surprised to hear that I have not met with more than one or two persons in this country who have ever read the works of Bacon or of Boyle. They delight to saunter in the upper story, sustained and adorned as it is, with the delicate proportions, the foliage and flourishes of the Corinthian order ; but they disdain to make any acquaintance or hold communication at all, with the Tuscan and Dorick plainness and strength, which base and support the whole edifice. As to lord Verulam, when he is considered as the father of experimental philosophy ; as the champion whose vigour battered down the idolized chimeras of Aristotle, together with all the appendant and immeasurable webs of the brain woven, and hung upon them by the ingenious dreamers of the schools ; as the hero who not only rescued and redeemed the world from all this darkness, jargon, perplexity and error ; but, from the stores of his own great mind, poured a flood of light upon the earth, straitened the devious paths of science, and planned the whole paradise, which we now find so full of fragrance, beauty, and grandeur—when he is considered, I say, in these points of view, I am astonished that literary gentlemen do not court his acquaintance, if not through reverence, at least through curiosity. The person, who does, so will find every period filled with pure, solid, golden bullion ; that bullion

which several much admired, posterior writers have merely moulded to various forms, or beaten into leaf and taught to spread its floating splendours to the sun.

This insatiable palate for novelty, which I have mentioned, has had a very striking effect on the style of modern productions. The plain language of easy conversation will no longer do. The writer who contends for fame or even truth, is obliged to consult the reigning taste of the day. Hence, too often, in opposition to his own judgment, he is led to incumber his ideas with his gorgeous load of ornaments ; and when he would present to the publick a body of pure, substantial and useful thought, he finds himself constrained to encrust and bury its utility within a dazzling case, to convert a feast of reason to a concert of sounds : a rich intellectual boon into a mere bouquet of variegated pinks and blushing roses. In his turn he contributes to establish and spread wide the perversion of the publick taste : and thus, on a principle resembling that of action and re-action, the author and the publick reciprocate the injury ; just as, in the licentious reign of Charles II, the dramatist and his audience were to poison each others morals.

A history of style would, indeed, be a curious and interesting one : I mean a philosophical, as well as a chronological history : one which, besides marking the gradations, changes and fluctuations exhibited in the

style of different ages and different countries, should open the regular or contingent causes and fluctuations. I should be particularly pleased to see a learned and penetrating mind employed on the questions whether the gradual adornment which we observe in a nation's style, results from the progress of science? Or whether there be an infancy, a youth, and a manhood in the toné of a nation's feelings; which rising in a distant age, like a new-born billow, rolls on through successive generations, with accumulating height and force, and bears along with it the concurrent expression of those feelings, until they both swell and tower in the sublime—and sometimes break into the *bathos*? The historical facts as well as the metaphysical consideration of the subject, perplex these questions extremely; and, as Sir Roger de Coverly says, "much may be said on both sides." For the present, I shall say nothing on either; except that from some of Mr. Blair's remarks it would seem that neither of those *hypothèses* will solve the *phénoménon* before us. If I remember his opinion correctly, the most sublime style is to be sought in a state of nature; when anterior to the existence of science, the scantiness of a language, forces a people to notice the points of resemblance between the great natural objects with which they are surrounded, to apply to one, the terms which belong to another, and thus, by compulsion, to fall, at

once, into simile and metaphor, and launch into all the boldness of trope and figure. If this be true; it would seem that the progress of a civilized nation towards sublimity of style is perfectly a retrograde manœuvre; that is, that they will be sublime according to the nearness of their approach to the primeval state of nature. This is curious and to me, a bewitching subject. But it leads to a volume of thought which is not to be condensed into a letter. I will remark only one extraordinary fact as it relates to style. The Augustan age is pronounced by some criticks to have furnished the finest models of style embellished to the highest endurable point; and of this, Cicero, is always adduced as the most illustrious example. Yet it is remarkable, that seventy or eighty years afterwards, when the Roman style had become much more luxuriant and was denounced by the criticks of the day\* as having transcended the limits of genuine ornament, Pliny the younger, in a letter to a friend, thought it necessary to enter into a formal vindication of three or four metaphors which he had used in an oration, and which had been censured in Rome for their extravagance; but which by the side of the meanest of Curran's figures, would be poor insipid and flat. Yet who will say that Curran's style has gone beyond the point of endurance? Who is not pleased with its purity? Who is not ravished by its sublimity!

In England, how wide is the chasm between the style of Lord Verulam and that of Edmund Burke, or M'Intosh's introduction to his *Vindictæ Gallicæ* ! That of the first is the plain dress of a quaker ; and that of the two last, the magnificent paraphernalia of Louis XIV of France. In Lord Verulam's day, his style was distinguished for its superior ornaments, and in this respect, it was thought impossible to surpass it. Yet Mr. Burke, Mr. M'Intosh and the other fine writers of the present age, have, by contrast, reduced Lord Verulam's flower garden to the appearance of a simple culinary square.

Perhaps it is for this reason, and because, as you know, I am an epicure, that I am very much interested by Lord Verulam's manner. It is indeed a most agreeable relief to my mind to turn from the stately and dazzling rhapsodies of the day, and converse with this plain and sensible old gentleman. To me, his style is gratifying on many accounts ; and there is this advantage in him, that instead of having three or four ideas rolled over and over again, like the fantastick evolutions and ever changing shapes of the sun-embroidered cloud, you gain new materials, new information at every breath. Sir Robert Boyle is, in my opinion, another author of the same description, and therefore an equal if not a higher favourite with me. In point of ornament he is the first grade in the mighty chasm (through the whole of which the gradations

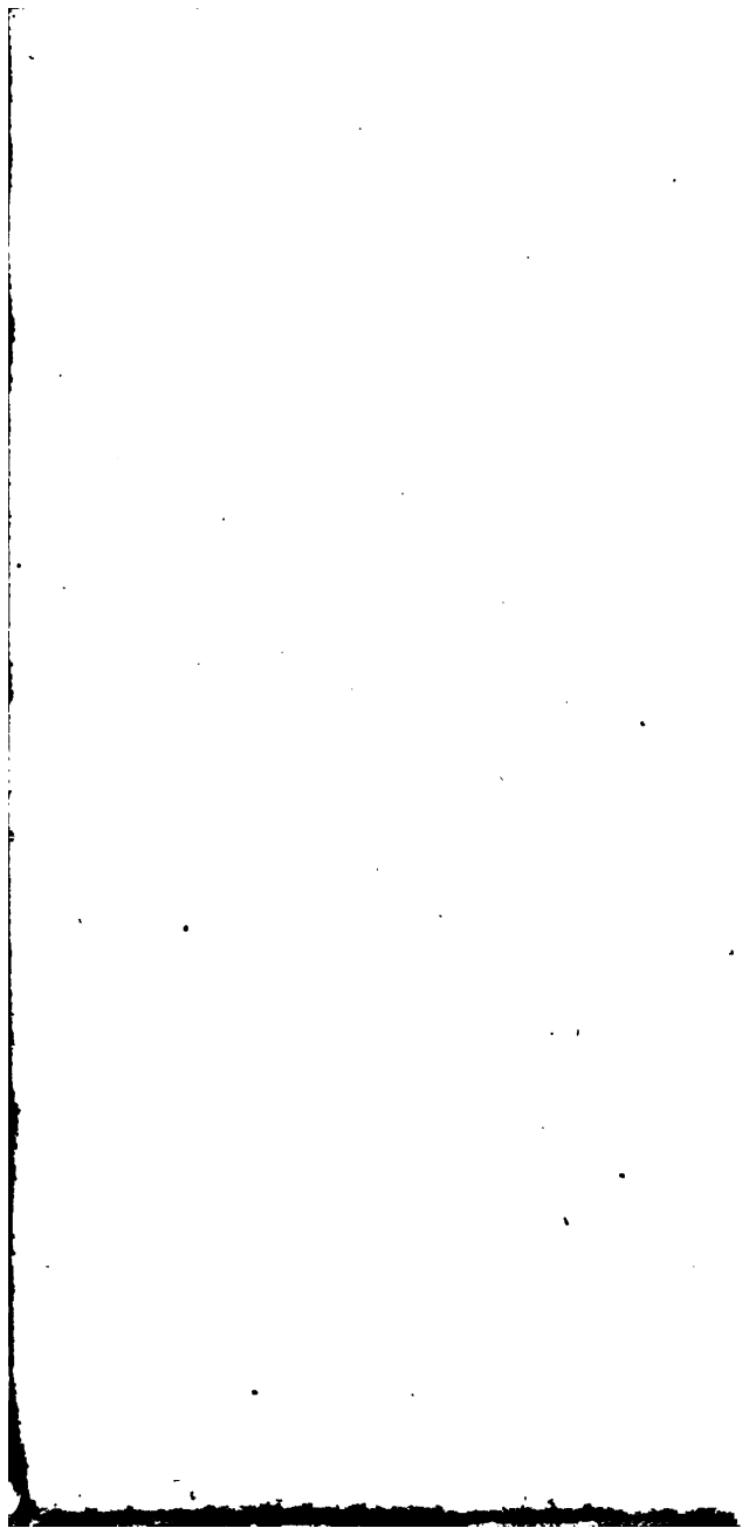
may be distinctly traced) between Bacon and Burke. Yet he has no redundant verbiage ; has about him a perfectly patriarchal simplicity, and every period is pregnant with matter. He has this advantage too over Lord Verulam ; that he not only investigates all the subjects which are calculated to try the clearness, the force and comprehension of the human intellect : he introduces others, also, in handling whereof, he shews the masterly powers with which he could touch the keys of the heart, and awaken all the tones of sensibility which belong to man. Surely if ever a human being deserved to be canonized for great, unclouded intelligence, and seraphick purity, and ecstacy of soul, that being was Sir Robert Boyle. When I reflect that this " pure intelligence, this link between men and angels," was a christian, and look around upon the petty infidels and deists with which the world swarms, I am lost in amazement ! Have they seen arguments against religion which were not presented to Robert Boyle ? His religious works shew that they have not. Are their judgments better able to weigh those arguments than his was ? They have not the vanity even to believe it. Is the beam of their judgment more steady, and less liable to be disturbed by passion than his ? O ! no ; for in this he seems to have excelled all mankind. Are their minds more elevated and more capa-

ble of comprehending the whole of this great subject with all its connexions and dependencies, than was the mind of Sir Robert ? Look at the men—and the question is answered. How then does it happen that they have been conducted to a conclusion, so perfectly the reverse of his ; It is for this very reason ; because their judgments are less extricated from the influence and raised above the mists of passion ; it is because their minds are less ethereal and comprehensive ; less capable than his was, ' to look through nature up to nature's God.' And let them hug their precious, barren, hopeless infidelity ; they are welcome to the horrible embrace !—May we, my friend, never lose the rich and inexhaustible comforts of religion ! Adieu ! my \*\*\*\*\*.

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## BRITISH SPY.

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### CHARACTERS, &c.

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RICHMOND, SEPTEMBER 23.

THE \*\*\*\*\* of this Commonwealth is the \*\*\*\*\* who was not many years ago, the \*\*\*\*\* at Paris. His present office is sufficient evidence of the estimation in which he is held by his native State.—In his stature he is about the middle height of men, rather firmly set, with nothing farther remarkable in his person, except its muscular compactness and apparent ability to endure labour. His countenance, when grave, has rather the expression of sternness and irascibility : a smile however, (and a smile is not unusual with him in a social circle) lights it up to very high advantage and gives it a most impressive and engaging air of suavity and benevolence. Judging merely from his countenance, he is between the ages of forty-five and fifty years. His dress and personal appearance are those of a plain and modest gentleman. He is a man of soft, polite and even assiduous attentions ; but these, although they are always

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† Hon. James Monroe, formerly Governor of Virginia ; now Minister at the Court of Great Britain.

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well timed, and evidently the offspring of an obliging and philanthropic temper, are never performed with the striking and captivating graces of a Marlborough or a Bellingbroke. To be plain, there is often in his manner an inartificial and even an awkward simplicity, which, while it provokes the smile of a more polished person forces him to the opinion that Mr. \*\*\*\*\* is a man of a most sincere and artless soul..

Nature has given him a mind neither rapid nor rich ; and therefore, he cannot shine on a subject which is entirely new to him. But to compensate him for this, he's endued with a spirit of generous and restless emulation, a judgment solid, strong and clear, and a habit of application which no difficulties can shake, no labours can tire. With these aids, simply, he has qualified himself for the first honours of this country ; and presents a most happy illustration of the truth of the maxim *Quisque sua fortunae faber*. For his emulation has urged him to perpetual and unremitting inquiry ; his patient and unwearied industry has concentrated before him all the lights which others have thrown on the subjects of his consideration, together with all those which his own mind, by repeated efforts, is enabled to strike ; while his sober, steady and faithful judgment has saved him from the common error of more quick and brilliant geniuses, the too hasty adoption of specious but false conclu-

sions. These qualities render him a safe and an able counsellor. And by their constant exertion he has amassed a store of knowledge which, having passed, seven times, through the crucible, is almost as highly corrected as human knowledge can be ; and which certainly, may be much more safely relied on, than the spontaneous and luxuriant growth of a mere fertile but less chastened mind—"a wild where weeds and flowers, promiscuous shoot."

Having engaged very early, first in the life of a soldier, then of a statesman, then of a laborious practitioner of the law, and, finally, again, of a politician, his intellectual operations have been almost entirely confined to judicial and political topicks. Indeed it is easier to perceive, that the mind of a man engaged in so active a life, must possess more native suppleness, versatility and vigour than that of Mr. \*\*\*\*\*\*, to be able to make an advantageous tour of the sciences in the rare interval of importunate duties. It is possible that the early habit of contemplating subjects as expanded as the earth itself, with all the relative interests of the great nations thereof, may have inspired him with an indifference, perhaps an inaptitude for mere points of literature. Algernon Sidney has said that he deems all studies unworthy the serious regard of a man except the study of the principles of just government ; and Mr. \*\*\*\*\*\*, perhaps concurs with our country-

man in this as well as in all his other principles. Whatever may have been the occasion, his acquaintance with the fine arts is certainly very limited and superficial ; but making allowances for his bias towards republicanism, he is a profound and even an eloquent statesman.

Knowing him to be attached to that political party, who, by their opponents, are called sometimes democrats, sometimes jacobins ; and aware also that he was a man of warm and even ardent temper, I dreaded much, when I first entered his company that I should have been shocked and disgusted with the narrow, virulent and rancorous invectives of party animosity. How agreeably, how delightfully was I disappointed ! Not one sentiment of intolerance polluted his lips. On the contrary, whether they are the offspring of rational induction, of the habit of surveying men and things on a great scale, of native magnanimity, or of a combination of all those causes, his principles as far as they were expressed, were forbearing, liberal, widely extended and great.

As the elevated ground which he already holds has been gained merely by the dint of application ; as every new step which he mounts, becomes a means of increasing his powers still farther, by stimulating his enterprise afresh, reinvigorating his habits, multiplying the materials and extending the range of his knowledge, it would be a matter of

so surprise to me, if before his death, the world should see him at the head of the American administration.—So much for the \*\*\* \*\*\*\*\* of the commonwealth of Virginia ; a living, an honourable, and illustrious monument of self-created eminence, worth and greatness!—Let us now change the scene and lead forward a very different character indeed : a truant, but a highly favoured pupil of Nature. It would seem as if this capricious goddess had finished the two characters purely with the view of exhibiting a vivid contrast. Nor is this contrast confined to their minds.

The \*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\* of the United States,\* is, in his person, tall, meagre, emaciated ; his muscles relaxed and his joints so loosely connected, as not only to disqualify him for any vigorous exertion of body, but to destroy every thing like elegance and harmony in his air and movements. Indeed in his whole appearance, and demeanour ; dress, attitudes, gesture ; sitting, standing or walking, he is as far removed from the idolized graces of Lord Chesterfield, as any other gentleman on earth. To continue the portrait—his head and face are small in proportion to his height ; the muscles of his face, being relaxed, give him the appearance of a man of fifty years of age, nor can he be much younger ; his countenance has a faithful expression of great good humour and hilarity ; while his black eyes, that unerring index—possess

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\* Chief Justice JOHN MARSHALL.

an irradiating spirit, which proclaims the imperial powers of the mind that sits enthroned within.

This extraordinary man, without the aid of fancy, without the advantages of person, voice, attitude, or any of the ornaments of an orator, deserves to be considered as one of the most eloquent men in the world ; if eloquence may be said to consist in the power of seizing the attention with irresistible force, and never permitting it to elude the grasp until the hearer has received the conviction which the speaker intends. As to his person, it has been already described. His voice is dry and hard ; his attitude, in his most effective orations, was often extremely awkward, as it was not unusual for him to stand with his left foot in advance ; while all his gesture proceeded from his right arm, and consisted, merely in a vehement, perpendicular swing of it, from about the elevation of his head, to the bar, behind which he was accustomed to stand. As to fancy, if she holds a seat in his mind at all, which I very much doubt, his gigantick genius tramples with disdain on all her flower-deckt plats and blooming parteres.

How then, you will ask, with a look of incredulous curiosity, how is it possible that such a man can hold the attention of an audience enchain'd, through a speech of even ordinary length ? I will tell you.

He possesses one original and, almost, supernatural faculty: the faculty of developing a subject by a single glance of his mind, and detecting at once, the very point on which every controversy depends. No matter, what the question; though ten times more knotty than the "gnarled oak," the lightning of heaven is not more rapid nor more resistless, than his astonishing penetration. Nor does the exercise of it seem to cost him an effort. On the contrary it is as easy as vision. I am persuaded that his eyes do not fly over a landscape, and take in its various objects with more promptitude and facility, than his mind embraces and analyzes the most complex subject. Possessing this intellectual elevation which enables him to look down and comprehend the whole ground at once, he determines immediately and without difficulty, on which side the question may be most advantageously approached and assailed. In a bad cause, his art consists in laying his premises so remotely from the point directly in debate, or else in terms so general and so specious that the hearer, seeing no consequence which can be drawn from them, is just as willing to admit them, as not; but, his premises once admitted, the demonstration, however distant, follows as certainly, as cogently, as inevitably, as any demonstration in Euclid. All his eloquence consists in the apparently deep self-conviction and emphatick earnestness of

his manner ; the correspondent simplicity and energy of his style ; the close and logical connection of his thoughts ; and the easy gradations by which she opens his sight on the attentive minds of his hearers. The audience are never permitted to pause for a moment. There is no stopping to weave garlands of flowers, to hang in festoons, around a favourite argument. On the contrary, every sentence is progressive—every idea sheds new light on the subject—the listener is kept perpetually in that sweetly pleasurable vibration, with which the mind of man always receives new truths—the dawn advances in easy but unremitting pace—the subject opens gradually on the view—until, rising, in high relief, in all its native colours and proportions, the argument is consummated by the conviction of the delighted hearer.

The success of this gentleman has rendered it doubtful with several literary characters in this country, whether a high fancy be of real use or advantage to any one but a poet. They contend, that although the most beautiful flights of the happiest fancy, interspersed through an argument, may give an audience the momentary, delightful swell of admiration, the transient thrill of the divinest rapture ; yet that they produce no lasting effect in forwarding the purpose of the speaker : On the contrary that they break the unity and disperse the force of an argument, which otherwise advancing in close array,

like the phantaz of Sparta, would carry every thing before it. They gave an instance in the celebrated Curran, and pretend that his fine fancy, although it fires, dissolves and even transports his audience, to a momentary frenzy, is moral and a fatal misfortune to his clients; it diverts off the attention of the jurers from the intrinsic and essential merits of the defense; eclipses the justice of the client's cause amidst the blaze of the advocate's talents; induces a suspicion of the guilt, which requires such a glorious display of resoluteness to divert the inquiry; and substitutes a fruitless short lived extacy, in the place of permanent and substantial conviction. Hence, they say, that the client of Mr. Curran is invariably the victim of the prosecution which that able and eloquent advocate is employed to resist. The doctrine, in the abstract, may be true, or, as Doctor Doubtless says, it may not be true; for the present, it will not trouble you with the expression of my opinion. I fear, however very dear Sir\*\*\*\*, that Mr. Curran's failures, may be traced to a cause very different from any fault, either in the style or execution of his enchanting orations: a cause—but I am forgetting that this letter has yet to cross the Atlantic.\*

\* The sentiment which is suppressed, seems to wear the livery of Bedford, Moira and the Prince of Wales.

To return to the ~~more~~ ~~more~~ of the United States. His political adversaries al-  
lege that he is a mere lawyer ; that his  
mind has been so long trammelled by judicial  
precedent, so long habituated to the quart  
and tierce of forensick digladiation (as Doct.  
Johnson would probably have called it) as to  
be unequal to the discussion of a great ques-  
tion of state. Mr. Curran in his defence of  
Rowan, seems to have sanctioned the proba-  
bility of such an effect from such a cause,  
when he complains of his own mind as hav-  
ing been narrowed and circumscribed by a  
strict and technical adherence to established  
forms ; but in the next breath, an astonishing  
burst of the grandest thought and a  
power of comprehension to which there  
seems to be no earthly limit, proves that his  
complaint, as it relates to himself, is entirely  
without foundation. Indeed, if the objec-  
tion to the ~~more~~ ~~more~~ mean any thing  
more, than that he has not had the same illu-  
mination and exercise in matters of state as  
if he had devoted his life to them, I am un-  
willing to admit it. The force of a cannon  
is the same, whether pointed at a rampart or  
a man of war, although practice may have  
made the engineer more expert in the one  
case than in the other. So it is clear that  
practice may give a man a greater command  
over one class of subjects than another ; but  
the inherent energy of his mind remains the

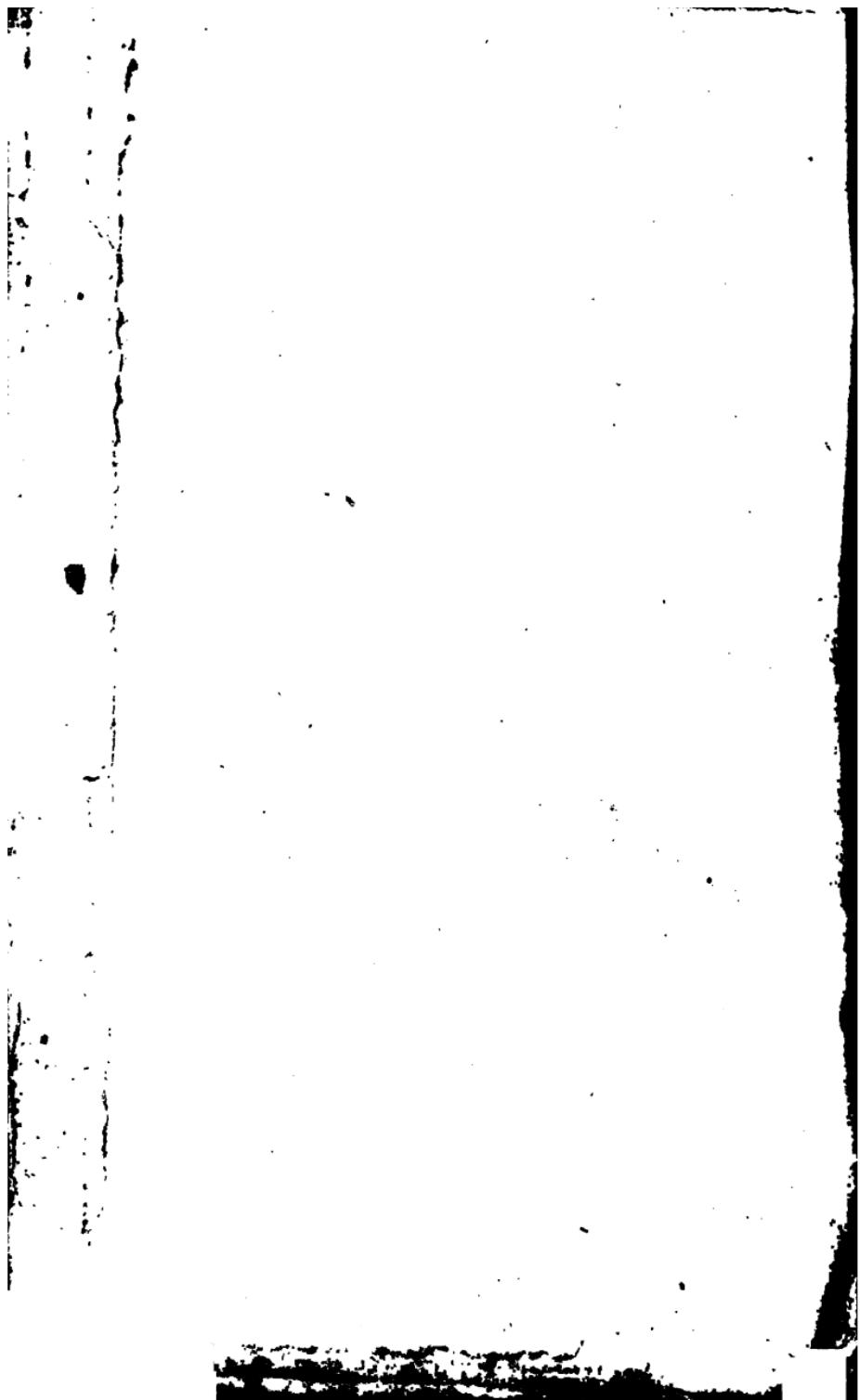
same, whithersoever it may be directed. From this impression, I have never seen any cause to wonder at what is called an universal genius ; it proves only that the man has applied a powerful mind to the consideration of a great variety of subjects, and pays a compliment rather to his superior intellect. I am very certain that the gentleman of whom we are speaking possesses *acumen* which might constitute him an universal genius, according to the usual acceptation of the phrase. But if he be the truant which his warmest friends represent him to be, there is very little probability that he will ever reach this distinction.

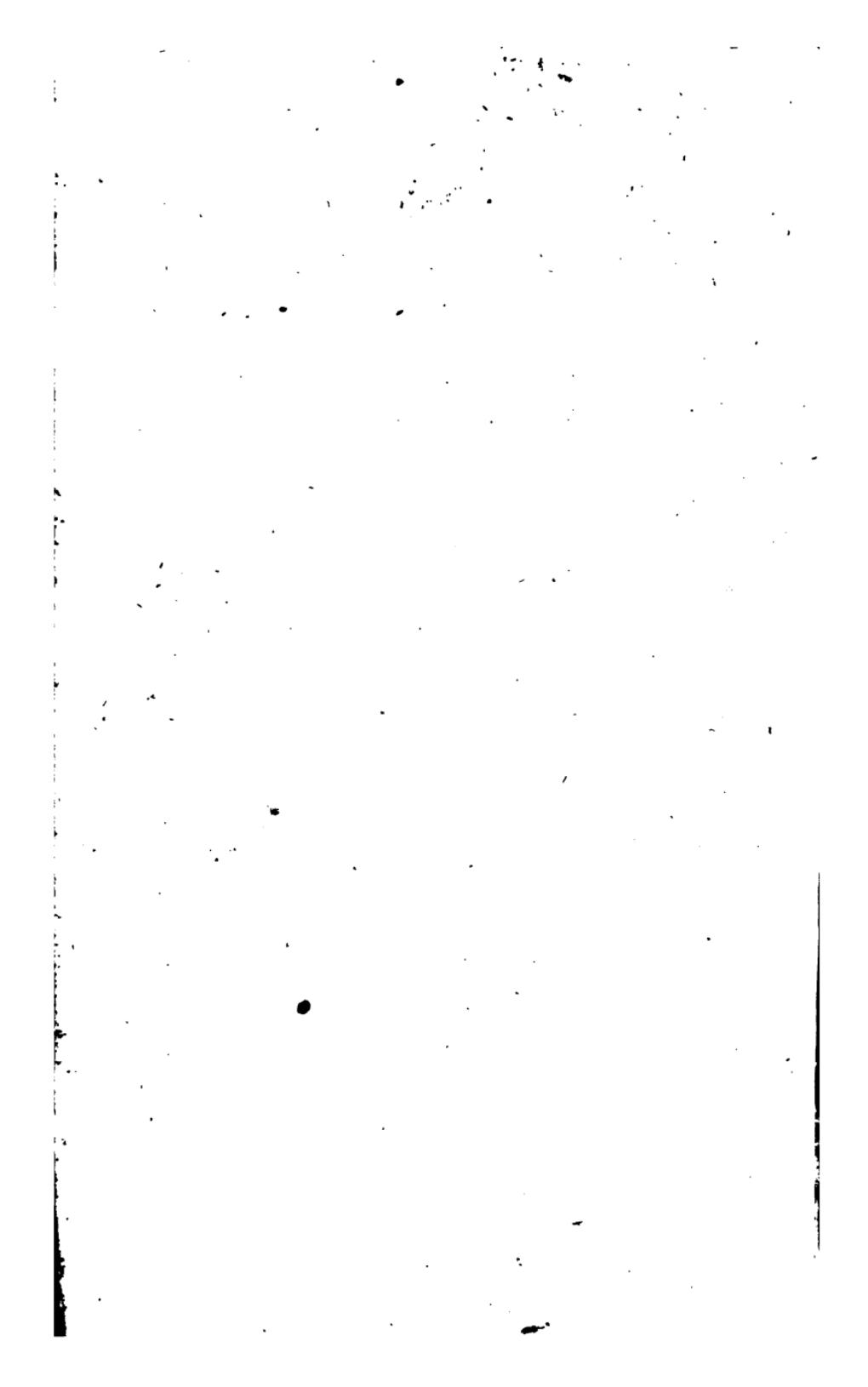
Think you my dear S\*\*\*\*\*\*, that the two gentlemen whom I have attempted to pourtray to you, were, according to the notion of Helvetius, born with equal minds, and that accident or education have produced the striking difference which we perceive to exist between them ? I wish it were the case ; and that the \*\*\*\*\* would be pleased to reveal to us by what accident or what system of education he has acquired his peculiar sagacity and promptitude. Until this shall be done, I fear I must consider the hypothesis of Helvetius as a splendid and flattering dream. But I tire you :—adieu, for the present, friend and guardian of my youth.

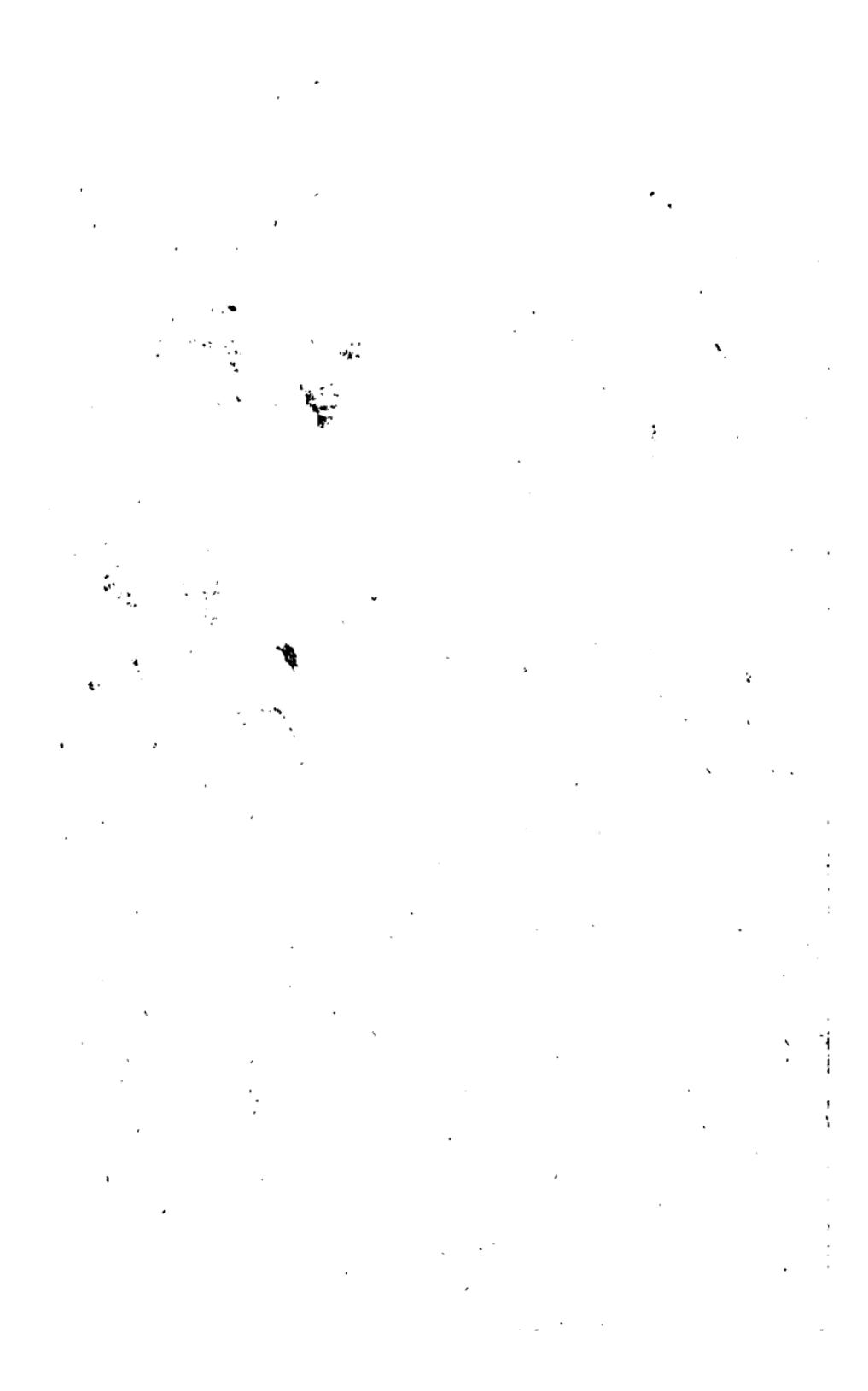
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